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THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP

AND OTHER SKETCHES

BY

BRET HARTE

S.F.C.

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THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP.

THERE was commotion in Roaring Camp. It could not have been a fight, for in 1850 that was not novel enough to have called together the entire settlement. The ditches and claims were not only deserted, but "Tuttle's grocery" had contributed its gamblers, who, it will be remembered, calmly continued their game the day that French Pete and Kanaka Joe shot each other to death over the bar in the front room. The whole camp was collected before a rude cabin on the outer edge of the clearing. Conversation was carried on in a low tone, but the name of a woman was frequently repeated. It was a name familiar enough in the camp, — "Cherokee Sal."

Perhaps the less said of her the better. She was a coarse, and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman. But at that time she was the only woman in Roaring Camp, and was just then lying in sore extremity, when

she most needed the ministration of her own sex. Dissolute abandoned, and irreclaimable, she was yet suffering a martyrdom hard enough to bear even when veiled by sympathizing womanhood, but now terrible in her loneliness. The primal curse had come to her in that original isolation which must have made the punishment of the first transgression so dreadful. It was, perhaps, part of the expiation of her sin that, at a moment when she most lacked her sex's intuitive tenderness and care, she met only the half-contemptuous faces of her masculine associates. Yet a few of the spectators were, I think, touched by her sufferings. Sandy Tipton thought it was "rough on Sal," and, in the contemplation of her condition, for a moment rose superior to the fact that he had an ace and two bowers in his sleeve.

It will be seen, also, that the situation was novel. Deaths were by no means uncommon in Roaring Camp, but a birth was a new thing. People had been dismissed the camp effectively, finally, and with no possibility of return; but this was the first time that anybody had been introduced *ab initio*. Hence the excitement.

"You go in there, Stumpy," said a prom-

inent citizen known as "Kentuck," addressing one of the loungers. "Go in there, and see what you kin do. You've had experience in them things."

Perhaps there was a fitness in the selection. Stumpy, in other climes, had been the putative head of two families; in fact, it was owing to some legal informality in these proceedings that Roaring Camp — a city of refuge — was indebted to his company. The crowd approved the choice, and Stumpy was wise enough to bow to the majority. The door closed on the extempore surgeon and midwife, and Roaring Camp sat down outside, smoked its pipe, and awaited the issue.

The assemblage numbered about a hundred men. One or two of these were actual fugitives from justice, some were criminal, and all were reckless. Physically, they exhibited no indication of their past lives and character. The greatest scamp had a Raphael face, with a profusion of blonde hair; Oakhurst, a gambler, had the melancholy air and intellectual abstraction of a Hamlet; the coolest and most courageous man was scarcely over five feet in height, with a soft voice and an embarrassed, timid manner. The term "roughs" applied to them was a distinction rather than

a definition. Perhaps in the minor details of fingers, toes, ears, etc., the camp may have been deficient, but these slight omissions did not detract from their aggregate force. The strongest man had but three fingers on his right hand; the best shot had but one eye.

Such was the physical aspect of the men that were dispersed around the cabin. The camp lay in a triangular valley, between two hills and a river. The only outlet was a steep trail over the summit of a hill that faced the cabin, now illuminated by the rising moon. The suffering woman might have seen it from the rude bunk whereon she lay, — seen it winding like a silver thread until it was lost in the stars above.

A fire of withered pine-boughs added sociability to the gathering. By degrees the natural levity of Roaring Camp returned. Bets were freely offered and taken regarding the result. Three to five that "Sal would get through with it;" even that the child would survive; side bets as to the sex and complexion of the coming stranger. In the midst of an excited discussion an exclamation came from those nearest the door, and the camp stopped to listen. Above the swaying and moaning of the pines, the swift rush

of the river, and the crackling of the fire rose a sharp, querulous cry, — a cry unlike anything heard before in the camp. The pines stopped moaning; the river ceased to rush, and the fire to crackle. It seemed as if Nature had stopped to listen, too.

The camp rose to its feet as one man! It was proposed to explode a barrel of gunpowder, but, in consideration of the situation of the mother, better counsels prevailed, and only a few revolvers were discharged: for, whether owing to the rude surgery of the camp, or some other reason, Cherokee Sal was sinking fast. Within an hour she had climbed, as it were, that rugged road that led to the stars, and so passed out of Roaring Camp, its sin and shame, forever. I do not think that the announcement disturbed them much, except in speculation as to the fate of the child. "Can he live now?" was asked of Stumpy. The answer was doubtful. The only other being of Cherokee Sal's sex and maternal condition in the settlement was an ass. There was some conjecture as to fitness, but the experiment was tried. It was less problematical than the ancient treatment of Romulus and Remus, and apparently as successful.

When these details were completed, which exhausted another hour, the door was opened, and the anxious crowd of men, who had already formed themselves into a queue, entered in single file. Beside the low bunk or shelf, on which the figure of the mother was starkly outlined below the blankets, stood a pine table. On this a candle-box was placed, and within it, swathed in staring red flannel, lay the last arrival at Roaring Camp. Beside the candle-box was placed a hat. Its use was soon indicated. "Gentlemen," said Stumpy, with a singular mixture of authority and *ex officio* complacency, — "Gentlemen will please pass in at the front door, round the table, and out at the back door. Them as wishes to contribute anything toward the orphan will find a hat handy." The first man entered with his hat on; he uncovered, however, as he looked about him, and so, unconsciously, set an example to the next. In such communities good and bad actions are catching. As the procession filed in, comments were audible, — criticisms addressed, perhaps, rather to Stumpy, in the character of showman: "Is that him?" "Mighty small specimen;" "Has n't mor 'n got the color;" "Ain't bigger nor a derrin-

ger." The contributions were as characteristic: a silver tobacco-box; a doubloon; a navy revolver, silver mounted; a gold specimen; a very beautifully embroidered lady's handkerchief (from Oakhurst the gambler); a diamond breastpin; a diamond ring (suggested by the pin, with the remark from the giver that he "saw that pin and went two diamonds better"); a slung shot; a Bible (contributor not detected); a golden spur; a silver teaspoon (the initials, I regret to say, were not the giver's); a pair of surgeon's shears; a lancet; a Bank of England note for £5; and about $200 in loose gold and silver coin. During these proceedings Stumpy maintained a silence as impassive as the dead on his left, a gravity as inscrutable as that of the newly born on his right. Only one incident occurred to break the monotony of the curious procession. As Kentuck bent over the candle-box half curiously, the child turned, and, in a spasm of pain, caught at his groping finger, and held it fast for a moment. Kentuck looked foolish and embarrassed. Something like a blush tried to assert itself in his weather-beaten cheek. "The d—d little cuss!" he said, as he extricated his finger, with perhaps more ten-

derness and care than he might have been deemed capable of showing. He held that finger a little apart from its fellows as he went out, and examined it curiously. The examination provoked the same original remark in regard to the child. In fact, he seemed to enjoy repeating it. "He rastled with my finger," he remarked to Tipton, holding up the member, "the d—d little cuss!"

It was four o'clock before the camp sought repose. A light burnt in the cabin where the watchers sat, for Stumpy did not go to bed that night. Nor did Kentuck. He drank quite freely, and related with great gusto his experience, invariably ending with his characteristic condemnation of the new-comer. It seemed to relieve him of any unjust implication of sentiment, and Kentuck had the weaknesses of the nobler sex. When everybody else had gone to bed, he walked down to the river and whistled reflectingly. Then he walked up the gulch, past the cabin, still whistling with demonstrative unconcern. At a large redwood tree he paused and retraced his steps, and again passed the cabin. Halfway down to the river's bank he again paused, and then returned and knocked at the door. It was opened by Stumpy. "How

goes it?" said Kentuck, looking past Stumpy toward the candle-box. "All serene," replied Stumpy. "Anything up?" "Nothing." There was a pause, — an embarrassing one, — Stumpy still holding the door. Then Kentuck had recourse to his finger, which he held up to Stumpy. "Rastled with it, — the d—d little cuss," he said, and retired.

The next day Cherokee Sal had such rude sepulture as Roaring Camp afforded. After her body had been committed to the hillside, there was a formal meeting of the camp to discuss what should be done with her infant. A resolution to adopt it was unanimous and enthusiastic. But an animated discussion in regard to the manner and feasibility of providing for its wants at once sprang up. It was remarkable that the argument partook of none of those fierce personalities with which discussions were usually conducted at Roaring Camp. Tipton proposed that they should send the child to Red Dog, — a distance of forty miles, — where female attention could be procured. But the unlucky suggestion met with fierce and unanimous opposition. It was evident that no plan which entailed parting from their new acquisition would for a moment be entertained. "Be-

sides," said Tom Ryder, "them fellows at Red Dog would swap it, and ring in somebody else on us." A disbelief in the honesty of other camps prevailed at Roaring Camp, as in other places.

The introduction of a female nurse in the camp also met with objection. It was argued that no decent woman could be prevailed to accept Roaring Camp as her home, and the speaker urged that "they did n't want any more of the other kind." This unkind allusion to the defunct mother, harsh as it may seem, was the first spasm of propriety, — the first symptom of the camp's regeneration. Stumpy advanced nothing. Perhaps he felt a certain delicacy in interfering with the selection of a possible successor in office. But when questioned he averred stoutly that he and "Jinny" — the mammal before alluded to — could manage to rear the child. There was something original, independent, and heroic about the plan that pleased the camp. Stumpy was retained. Certain articles were sent for to Sacramento. "Mind," said the treasurer, as he pressed a bag of gold-dust into the expressman's hand, "the best that can be got, — lace, you know, and filigree-work and frills, — d—n the cost!"

Strange to say, the child thrived. Perhaps the invigorating climate of the mountain camp was compensation for material deficiencies. Nature took the foundling to her broader breast. In that rare atmosphere of the Sierra foot-hills, — that air pungent with balsamic odor, that ethereal cordial at once bracing and exhilarating, — he may have found food and nourishment, or a subtle chemistry that transmuted ass's milk to lime and phosphorus. Stumpy inclined to the belief that it was the latter and good nursing. "Me and that ass," he would say, "has been father and mother to him! Don't you," he would add, apostrophizing the helpless bundle before him, "never go back on us."

By the time he was a month old the necessity of giving him a name became apparent. He had generally been known as "The Kid," "Stumpy's Boy," "The Coyote" (an allusion to his vocal powers), and even by Kentuck's endearing diminutive of "The d—d little cuss." But these were felt to be vague and unsatisfactory, and were at last dismissed under another influence. Gamblers and adventurers are generally superstitious, and Oakhurst one day declared that the baby had brought "the luck" to Roaring Camp.

It was certain that of late they had been successful. "Luck" was the name agreed upon, with the prefix of Tommy for greater convenience. No allusion was made to the mother, and the father was unknown. "It's better," said the philosophical Oakhurst, "to take a fresh deal all round. Call him Luck, and start him fair." A day was accordingly set apart for the christening. What was meant by this ceremony the reader may imagine, who has already gathered some idea of the reckless irreverence of Roaring Camp. The master of ceremonies was one "Boston," a noted wag, and the occasion seemed to promise the greatest facetiousness. This ingenious satirist had spent two days in preparing a burlesque of the Church service, with pointed local allusions. The choir was properly trained, and Sandy Tipton was to stand godfather. But after the procession had marched to the grove with music and banners, and the child had been deposited before a mock altar, Stumpy stepped before the expectant crowd. "It ain't my style to spoil fun, boys," said the little man, stoutly eying the faces around him, "but it strikes me that this thing ain't exactly on the squar. It's playing it pretty low down on this yer

baby to ring in fun on him that he ain't goin' to understand. And ef there 's going to be any godfathers round, I 'd like to see who 's got any better rights than me." A silence followed Stumpy's speech. To the credit of all humorists be it said that the first man to acknowledge its justice was the satirist, thus stopped of his fun. "But," said Stumpy, quickly following up his advantage, "we 're here for a christening, and we 'll have it. I proclaim you Thomas Luck, according to the laws of the United States and the State of California, so help me God." It was the first time that the name of the Deity had been otherwise uttered than profanely in the camp. The form of christening was perhaps even more ludicrous than the satirist had conceived; but, strangely enough, nobody saw it and nobody laughed. "Tommy" was christened as seriously as he would have been under a Christian roof, and cried and was comforted in as orthodox fashion.

And so the work of regeneration began in Roaring Camp. Almost imperceptibly a change came over the settlement. The cabin assigned to "Tommy Luck" — or "The Luck," as he was more frequently called — first showed signs of improvement. It was

kept scrupulously clean and whitewashed. Then it was boarded, clothed, and papered. The rosewood cradle — packed eighty miles by mule — had, in Stumpy's way of putting it, "sorter killed the rest of the furniture." So the rehabilitation of the cabin became a necessity. The men who were in the habit of lounging in at Stumpy's to see "how 'The Luck' got on" seemed to appreciate the change, and, in self-defence, the rival establishment of "Tuttle's grocery" bestirred itself, and imported a carpet and mirrors. The reflections of the latter on the appearance of Roaring Camp tended to produce stricter habits of personal cleanliness. Again, Stumpy imposed a kind of quarantine upon those who aspired to the honor and privilege of holding The Luck. It was a cruel mortification to Kentuck — who, in the carelessness of a large nature and the habits of frontier life, had begun to regard all garments as a second cuticle, which, like a snake's, only sloughed off through decay — to be debarred this privilege from certain prudential reasons. Yet such was the subtle influence of innovation, that he thereafter appeared regularly every afternoon in a clean shirt, and face still shining from his

ablutions. Nor were moral and social sanitary laws neglected. "Tommy," who was supposed to spend his whole existence in a persistent attempt to repose, must not be disturbed by noise. The shouting and yelling which had gained the camp its infelicitous title were not permitted within hearing distance of Stumpy's. The men conversed in whispers, or smoked with Indian gravity. Profanity was tacitly given up in these sacred precincts, and throughout the camp a popular form of expletive, known as "D—n the luck!" and "Curse the luck!" was abandoned, as having a new personal bearing. Vocal music was not interdicted, being supposed to have a soothing, tranquillizing quality, and one song, sung by "Man-o'-War Jack," an English sailor from her Majesty's Australian colonies, was quite popular as a lullaby. It was a lugubrious recital of the exploits of "the Arethusa, Seventy-four," in a muffled minor, ending with a prolonged dying fall at the burden of each verse, "On b-oo-o-ard of the Arethusa." It was a fine sight to see Jack holding The Luck, rocking from side to side as if with the motion of a ship, and crooning forth this naval ditty. Either through the peculiar rocking of Jack

or the length of his song, — it contained ninety stanzas, and was continued with conscientious deliberation to the bitter end, — the lullaby generally had the desired effect. At such times the men would lie at full length under the trees, in the soft summer twilight, smoking their pipes and drinking in the melodious utterances. An indistinct idea that this was pastoral happiness pervaded the camp. "This 'ere kind o' think," said the Cockney Simmons, meditatively reclining on his elbow, "is 'evingly." It reminded him of Greenwich.

On the long summer days The Luck was usually carried to the gulch, from whence the golden store of Roaring Camp was taken. There, on a blanket spread over pine-boughs, he would lie while the men were working in the ditches below. Latterly, there was a rude attempt to decorate this bower with flowers and sweet-smelling shrubs, and generally some one would bring him a cluster of wild honeysuckles, azaleas, or the painted blossoms of Las Mariposas. The men had suddenly awakened to the fact that there were beauty and significance in these trifles which they had so long trodden carelessly beneath their feet. A flake of glittering

mica, a fragment of variegated quartz, a bright pebble from the bed of the creek, became beautiful to eyes thus cleared and strengthened, and were invariably put aside for The Luck. It was wonderful how many treasures the woods and hillsides yielded that "would do for Tommy." Surrounded by playthings such as never child out of fairy-land had before, it is to be hoped that Tommy was content. He appeared to be serenely happy, albeit there was an infantine gravity about him, a contemplative light in his round gray eyes, that sometimes worried Stumpy. He was always tractable and quiet, and it is recorded that once, having crept beyond his "corral," — a hedge of tessellated pine-boughs which surrounded his bed, — he dropped over the bank on his head in the soft earth, and remained with his mottled legs in the air in that position for at least five minutes with unflinching gravity. He was extricated without a murmur. I hesitate to record the many other instances of his sagacity, which rest, unfortunately, upon the statements of prejudiced friends. Some of them were not without a tinge of superstition. "I crep' up the bank just now," said Kentuck one day,

in a breathless state of excitement, "and dern my skin if he was n't a talking to a jaybird as was a sittin' on his lap. There they was, just as free and sociable as any thing you please, a jawin' at each other just like two cherrybums." Howbeit, whether creeping over the pine-boughs or lying lazily on his back blinking at the leaves above him, to him the birds sang, the squirrels chattered, and the flowers bloomed. Nature was his nurse and playfellow. For him she would let slip between the leaves golden shafts of sunlight that fell just within his grasp; she would send wandering breezes to visit him with the balm of bay and resinous gum: to him the tall redwoods nodded familiarly and sleepily, the bumble-bees buzzed, and the rooks cawed a slumbrous accompaniment.

Such was the golden summer of Roaring Camp. They were "flush times," — and the luck was with them. The claims had yielded enormously. The camp was jealous of its privileges and looked suspiciously on strangers. No encouragement was given to immigration, and, to make their seclusion more perfect, the land on either side of the mountain wall that surrounded the camp

they duly preëmpted. This, and a reputation for singular proficiency with the revolver, kept the reserve of Roaring Camp inviolate. The expressman — their only connecting link with the surrounding world — sometimes told wonderful stories of the camp. He would say, "They 've a street up there in 'Roaring' that would lay over any street in Red Dog. They 've got vines and flowers round their houses, and they wash themselves twice a day. But they 're mighty rough on strangers, and they worship an Ingin baby."

With the prosperity of the camp came a desire for further improvement. It was proposed to build a hotel in the following spring, and to invite one or two decent families to reside there for the sake of The Luck, who might perhaps profit by female companionship. The sacrifice that this concession to the sex cost these men, who were fiercely skeptical in regard to its general virtue and usefulness, can only be accounted for by their affection for Tommy. A few still held out. But the resolve could not be carried into effect for three months, and the minority meekly yielded in the hope that something might turn up to prevent it. And it did.

The winter of 1851 will long be remembered in the foot-hills. The snow lay deep on the Sierras, and every mountain creek became a river, and every river a lake. Each gorge and gulch was transformed into a tumultuous watercourse, that descended the hillsides, tearing down giant trees and scattering its drift and débris along the plain. Red Dog had been twice under water, and Roaring Camp had been forewarned. "Water put the gold into them gulches," said Stumpy. "It 's been here once and will be here again!" And that night the North Fork suddenly leaped over its banks, and swept up the triangular valley of Roaring Camp.

In the confusion of rushing water, crashing trees, and crackling timber, and the darkness which seemed to flow with the water and blot out the fair valley, but little could be done to collect the scattered camp. When the morning broke, the cabin of Stumpy, nearest the river-bank, was gone. Higher up the gulch they found the body of its unlucky owner; but the pride, the hope, the joy, The Luck, of Roaring Camp had disappeared. They were returning with sad hearts, when a shout from the bank recalled them.

It was a relief-boat from down the river. They had picked up, they said, a man and an infant, nearly exhausted, about two miles below. Did anybody know them, and did they belong here?

It needed but a glance to show them Kentuck lying there cruelly crushed and bruised, but still holding The Luck of Roaring Camp in his arms. As they bent over the strangely assorted pair they saw that the child was cold and pulseless. "He is dead," said one. Kentuck opened his eyes. "Dead?" he repeated feebly. "Yes, my man, and you are dying too." A smile lit the eyes of the expiring Kentuck. "Dying!" he repeated; "he 's a taking me with him. Tell the boys I've got The Luck with me now;" and the strong man, clinging to the frail babe as a drowning man is said to cling to a straw, drifted away into the shadowy river that flows forever to the unknown sea.

MLISS.

CHAPTER I.

JUST where the Sierra Nevada begins to subside in gentler undulations, and the rivers grow less rapid and yellow, on the side of a great red mountain, stands "Smith's Pocket." Seen from the red road at sunset, in the red light and the red dust, its white houses look like the outcroppings of quartz on the mountain-side. The red stage topped with red-shirted passengers is lost to view half a dozen times in the tortuous descent, turning up unexpectedly in out-of-the-way places, and vanishing altogether within a hundred yards of the town. It is probably owing to this sudden twist in the road that the advent of a stranger at Smith's Pocket is usually attended with a peculiar circumstance. Dismounting from the vehicle at the stage-office, the too confident traveller is apt to walk straight out of town under the impression that *it* lies in quite another direc-

tion. It is related that one of the tunnel-men, two miles from town, met one of these self-reliant passengers with a carpet-bag, umbrella, Harper's Magazine, and other evidences of "civilization and refinement," plodding along over the road he had just ridden, vainly endeavoring to find the settlement of Smith's Pocket.

An observant traveller might have found some compensation for his disappointment in the weird aspect of that vicinity. There were huge fissures on the hillside, and displacements of the red soil, resembling more the chaos of some primary elemental upheaval than the work of man; while, halfway down, a long flume straddled its narrow body and disproportionate legs over the chasm, like an enormous fossil of some forgotten antediluvian. At every step smaller ditches crossed the road, hiding in their sallow depths unlovely streams that crept away to a clandestine union with the great yellow torrent below, and here and there were the ruins of some cabin, with the chimney alone left intact and the hearthstone open to the skies.

The settlement of Smith's Pocket owed its origin to the finding of a "pocket" on its

site by a veritable Smith. Five thousand dollars were taken out of it in one half-hour by Smith. Three thousand dollars were expended by Smith and others in erecting a flume and in tunnelling. And then Smith's Pocket was found to be only a pocket, and subject, like other pockets, to depletion. Although Smith pierced the bowels of the great red mountain, that five thousand dollars was the first and last return of his labor. The mountain grew reticent of its golden secrets, and the flume steadily ebbed away the remainder of Smith's fortune. Then Smith went into quartz-mining; then into quartz-milling; then into hydraulics and ditching, and then by easy degrees into saloon-keeping. Presently it was whispered that Smith was drinking a great deal; then it was known that Smith was a habitual drunkard; and then people began to think, as they are apt to, that he had never been anything else. But the settlement of Smith's Pocket, like that of most discoveries, was happily not dependent on the fortune of its pioneer, and other parties projected tunnels and found pockets. So Smith's Pocket became a settlement, with its two fancy stores, its two hotels, its one express-office, and its

two first families. Occasionally its one long straggling street was overawed by the assumption of the latest San Francisco fashions, imported per express, exclusively to the first families; making outraged Nature, in the ragged outline of her furrowed surface, look still more homely, and putting personal insult on that greater portion of the population to whom the Sabbath, with a change of linen, brought merely the necessity of cleanliness, without the luxury of adornment. Then there was a Methodist Church, and hard by a Monte Bank, and a little beyond, on the mountain-side, a graveyard, and then a little schoolhouse.

"The Master," as he was known to his little flock, sat alone one night in the schoolhouse, with some open copy-books before him, carefully making those bold and full characters which are supposed to combine the extremes of chirographical and moral excellence, and had got as far as "Riches are deceitful," and was elaborating the noun with an insincerity of flourish that was quite in the spirit of his text, when he heard a gentle tapping. The woodpeckers had been busy about the roof during the day, and the noise did not disturb his work. But the

opening of the door, and the tapping continuing from the inside, caused him to look up. He was slightly startled by the figure of a young girl, dirty and shabbily clad. Still, her great black eyes, her coarse, uncombed, lustreless black hair falling over her sunburned face, her red arms and feet streaked with the red soil, were all familiar to him. It was Melissa Smith, — Smith's motherless child.

"What can she want here?" thought the master. Everybody knew "Mliss," as she was called, throughout the length and height of Red Mountain. Everybody knew her as an incorrigible girl. Her fierce, ungovernable disposition, her mad freaks and lawless character, were in their way as proverbial as the story of her father's weaknesses, and as philosophically accepted by the townsfolk. She wrangled with and fought the schoolboys with keener invective and quite as powerful arm. She followed the trails with a woodman's craft, and the master had met her before, miles away, shoeless, stockingless, and bareheaded on the mountain road. The miners' camps along the stream supplied her with subsistence, during these voluntary pilgrimages, in freely offered alms. Not but

that a larger protection had been previously extended to Mliss. The Rev. Joshua McSnagley, "stated" preacher, had placed her in the hotel as servant, by way of preliminary refinement, and had introduced her to his scholars at Sunday-school. But she threw plates occasionally at the landlord, and quickly retorted to the cheap witticisms of the guests, and created in the Sabbath-school a sensation that was so inimical to the orthodox dulness and placidity of that institution that, with a decent regard for the starched frocks and unblemished morals of the two pink-and-white-faced children of the first families, the reverend gentleman had her ignominiously expelled. Such were the antecedents and such the character of Mliss as she stood before the master. It was shown in the ragged dress, the unkempt hair, and bleeding feet, and asked his pity. It flashed from her black, fearless eyes, and commanded his respect.

"I come here to-night," she said rapidly and boldly, keeping her hard glance on his, "because I knew you was alone. I would n't come here when them gals was here. I hate 'em, and they hates me. That 's why. You keep school, don't you? I want to be teached!"

If to the shabbiness of her apparel and uncomeliness of her tangled hair and dirty face she had added the humility of tears the master would have extended to her the usual moiety of pity, and nothing more. But with the natural, though illogical, instincts of his species, her boldness awakened in him something of that respect which all original natures pay unconsciously to one another in any grade. And he gazed at her the more fixedly as she went on, still rapidly, her hand on that door-latch and her eyes on his: —

"My name 's Mliss, — Mliss Smith! You can bet your life on that. My father 's Old Smith, — Old Bummer Smith, — that 's what 's the matter with him. Mliss Smith, — and I 'm coming to school!"

"Well?" said the master.

Accustomed to be thwarted and opposed, often wantonly and cruelly, for no other purpose than to excite the violent impulses of her nature, the master's phlegm evidently took her by surprise. She stopped; she began to twist a lock of her hair between her fingers; and the rigid line of upper lip, drawn over the wicked little teeth, relaxed and quivered slightly. Then her eyes dropped, and something like a blush struggled up to

her cheek, and tried to assert itself through the splashes of redder soil and the sunburn of years. Suddenly she threw herself forward, calling on God to strike her dead, and fell quite weak and helpless, with her face on the master's desk, crying and sobbing as if her heart would break.

The master lifted her gently, and waited for the paroxysm to pass. When, with face still averted, she was repeating between her sobs the *mea culpa* of childish penitence, — that "she 'd be good, she did n't mean to," etc., — it came to him to ask her why she had left Sabbath-school.

Why had she left the Sabbath-school? — why? Oh, yes! What did he (McSnagley) want to tell her she was wicked for? What did he tell her that God hated her for? If God hated her, what did she want to go to Sabbath-school for? *She* did n't want to be "beholden" to anybody who hated her.

Had she told McSnagley this?

Yes, she had.

The master laughed. It was a hearty laugh, and echoed so oddly in the little schoolhouse, and seemed so inconsistent and discordant with the sighing of the pines without, that he shortly corrected himself

with a sigh. The sigh was quite as sincere in its way, however, and after a moment of serious silence he asked about her father.

Her father? What father? Whose father? What had he ever done for her? Why did the girls hate her? Come now! what made the folks say "Old Bummer Smith's Mliss!" when she passed? Yes; oh, yes! She wished he was dead, — she was dead, — everybody was dead; and her sobs broke forth anew.

The master then, leaning over her, told her as well as he could what you or I might have said after hearing such unnatural theories from childish lips; only bearing in mind perhaps better than you or I the unnatural facts of her ragged dress, her bleeding feet, and the omnipresent shadow of her drunken father. Then raising her to her feet, he wrapped his shawl around her, and, bidding her come early in the morning, he walked with her down the road. There he bade her "good-night." The moon shone brightly on the narrow path before them. He stood and watched the bent little figure as it staggered down the road, and waited until it had passed the little graveyard and reached the curve of the hill, where it turned and stood for a moment, a mere atom of suffering, out-

lined against the far-off patient stars. Then he went back to his work. But the lines of the copy-book thereafter faded into long parallels of never-ending road, over which childish figures seemed to pass sobbing and crying into the night. Then, the little schoolhouse seeming lonelier than before, he shut the door and went home.

The next morning Mliss came to school. Her face had been washed, and her coarse black hair bore evidence of recent struggles with the comb, in which both had evidently suffered. The old defiant look shone occasionally in her eyes, but her manner was tamer and more subdued. Then began a series of little trials and self-sacrifices, in which master and pupil bore an equal part, and which increased the confidence and sympathy between them. Although obedient under the master's eye, at times during recess, if thwarted or stung by a fancied slight, Mliss would rage in ungovernable fury; and many a palpitating young savage, finding himself matched with his own weapons of torment, would seek the master with torn jacket and scratched face, and complaints of the dreadful Mliss. There was a serious division among the townspeople on the sub-

ject; some threatening to withdraw their children from such evil companionship, and others as warmly upholding the course of the master in his work of reclamation. Meanwhile, with a steady persistence that seemed quite astonishing to him on looking back afterward, the master drew Mliss gradually out of the shadow of her past life, as though it were but her natural progress down the narrow path on which he had set her feet the moonlit night of their first meeting. Remembering the experience of the evangelical McSnagley, he carefully avoided that Rock of Ages on which that unskilful pilot had shipwrecked her young faith. But if, in the course of her reading, she chanced to stumble upon those few words which have lifted such as she above the level of the older, the wiser, and the more prudent, — if she learned something of a faith that is symbolized by suffering, and the old light softened in her eyes, — it did not take the shape of a lesson. A few of the plainer people had made up a little sum by which the ragged Mliss was enabled to assume the garments of respect and civilization; and often a rough shake of the hand and words of homely commendation from a red-shirted and burly figure sent

a glow to the cheek of the young master, and set him to thinking if it was altogether deserved.

Three months had passed from the time of their first meeting, and the master was sitting late one evening over the moral and sententious copies, when there came a tap at the door, and again Mliss stood before him. She was neatly clad and clean-faced, and there was nothing, perhaps, but the long black hair and bright black eyes to remind him of his former apparition. "Are you busy?" she asked. "Can you come with me?" — and on his signifying his readiness, in her old wilful way she said, "Come, then, quick!"

They passed out of the door together and into the dark road. As they entered the town the master asked her whither she was going. She replied, "To see my father."

It was the first time he had heard her call him by that filial title, or indeed anything more than "Old Smith" or the "Old man." It was the first time in three months that she had spoken of him at all, and the master knew she had kept resolutely aloof from him since her great change. Satisfied from

her manner that it was fruitless to question her purpose, he passively followed. In out-of-the-way places, low groggeries, restaurants, and saloons; in gambling-hells and dance-houses, the master, preceded by Mliss, came and went. In the reeking smoke and blasphemous outcries of low dens, the child, holding the master's hand, stood and anxiously gazed, seemingly unconscious of all in the one absorbing nature of her pursuit. Some of the revellers, recognizing Mliss, called to the child to sing and dance for them, and would have forced liquor upon her but for the interference of the master. Others, recognizing him, mutely made way for them to pass. So an hour slipped by. Then the child whispered in his ear that there was a cabin on the other side of the creek crossed by the long flume, where she thought he still might be. Thither they crossed, — a toilsome half-hour's walk, — but in vain. They were returning by the ditch at the abutment of the flume, gazing at the lights of the town on the opposite bank, when suddenly, sharply, a quick report rang out on the clear night air. The echoes caught it, and carried it round and round Red Mountain, and set the dogs to barking all along the streams.

Lights seemed to dance and move quickly on the outskirts of the town for a few moments, the stream rippled quite audibly beside them, a few stones loosened themselves from the hillside and splashed into the stream, a heavy wind seemed to surge the branches of the funereal pines, and then the silence seemed to fall thicker, heavier, and deadlier. The master turned towards Mliss with an unconscious gesture of protection, but the child had gone. Oppressed by a strange fear, he ran quickly down the trail to the river's bed, and, jumping from boulder to boulder, reached the base of Red Mountain and the outskirts of the village. Midway of the crossing he looked up and held his breath in awe. For high above him on the narrow flume he saw the fluttering little figure of his late companion crossing swiftly in the darkness.

He climbed the bank, and, guided by a few lights moving about a central point on the mountain, soon found himself breathless among a crowd of awe-stricken and sorrowful men.

Out from among them the child appeared, and, taking the master's hand, led him silently before what seemed a ragged hole in

the mountain. Her face was quite white, but her excited manner gone, and her look that of one to whom some long-expected event had at last happened, — an expression that to the master in his bewilderment seemed almost like relief. The walls of the cavern were partly propped by decaying timbers. The child pointed to what appeared to be some ragged, cast-off clothes left in the hole by the late occupant. The master approached nearer with his flaming dip, and bent over them. It was Smith, already cold, with a pistol in his hand and a bullet in his heart, lying beside his empty pocket.

CHAPTER II.

THE opinion which McSnagley expressed in reference to a "change of heart" supposed to be experienced by Mliss was more forcibly described in the gulches and tunnels. It was thought there that Mliss had "struck a good lead." So when there was a new grave added to the little enclosure, and at the expense of the master a little board and inscription put above it, the Red Mountain Banner came out quite handsomely, and did

the fair thing to the memory of one of "our oldest pioneers," alluding gracefully to that "bane of noble intellects," and otherwise genteelly shelving our dear brother with the past. "He leaves an only child to mourn his loss," says the Banner, "who is now an exemplary scholar, thanks to the efforts of the Rev. Mr. McSnagley." The Rev. McSnagley, in fact, made a strong point of Mliss's conversion, and, indirectly attributing to the unfortunate child the suicide of her father, made affecting allusions in Sunday-school to the beneficial effects of the "silent tomb," and in this cheerful contemplation drove most of the children into speechless horror, and caused the pink-and-white scions of the first families to howl dismally and refuse to be comforted.

The long dry summer came. As each fierce day burned itself out in little whiffs of pearl-gray smoke on the mountain summits, and the upspringing breeze scattered its red embers over the landscape, the green wave which in early spring upheaved above Smith's grave grew sere and dry and hard. In those days the master, strolling in the little churchyard of a Sabbath afternoon, was sometimes surprised to find a few wild-flowers plucked

from the damp pine-forests scattered there, and oftener rude wreaths hung upon the little pine cross. Most of these wreaths were formed of a sweet-scented grass, which the children loved to keep in their desks, intertwined with the plumes of the buckeye, the syringa, and the wood-anemone; and here and there the master noticed the dark blue cowl of the monk's-hood, or deadly aconite. There was something in the odd association of this noxious plant with these memorials which occasioned a painful sensation to the master deeper than his æsthetic sense. One day, during a long walk, in crossing a wooded ridge he came upon Mliss in the heart of the forest, perched upon a prostrate pine, on a fantastic throne formed by the hanging plumes of lifeless branches, her lap full of grasses and pine-burrs, and crooning to herself one of the negro melodies of her younger life. Recognizing him at a distance, she made room for him on her elevated throne, and, with a grave assumption of hospitality and patronage that would have been ridiculous had it not been so terribly earnest, she fed him with pine-nuts and crab-apples. The master took that opportunity to point out to her the noxious and deadly qualities of the

monk's-hood, whose dark blossoms he saw in her lap, and extorted from her a promise not to meddle with it as long as she remained his pupil. This done, — as the master had tested her integrity before, — he rested satisfied, and the strange feeling which had overcome him on seeing them died away.

Of the homes that were offered Mliss when her conversion became known, the master preferred that of Mrs. Morpher, a womanly and kind-hearted specimen of Southwestern efflorescence, known in her maidenhood as the "Per-rairie Rose." Being one of those who contend resolutely against their own natures, Mrs. Morpher, by a long series of self-sacrifices and struggles, had at last subjugated her naturally careless disposition to principles of "order," which she considered, in common with Mr. Pope, as "Heaven's first law." But she could not entirely govern the orbits of her satellites, however regular her own movements, and even her own "Jeemes" sometimes collided with her. Again her old nature asserted itself in her children. Lycurgus dipped into the cupboard "between meals," and Aristides came home from school without shoes, leaving those important articles on the threshold, for the delight of a

barefooted walk down the ditches. Octavia and Cassandra were "keerless" of their clothes. So with but one exception, however much the "Prairie Rose" might have trimmed and pruned and trained her own matured luxuriance, the little shoots came up defiantly wild and straggling. That one exception was Clytemnestra Morpher, aged fifteen. She was the realization of her mother's immaculate conception, — neat, orderly, and dull.

It was an amiable weakness of Mrs. Morpher to imagine that "Clytie" was a consolation and model for Mliss. Following this fallacy, Mrs. Morpher threw Clytie at the head of Mliss when she was "bad," and set her up before the child for adoration in her penitential moments. It was not, therefore, surprising to the master to hear that Clytie was coming to school, obviously as a favor to the master and as an example for Mliss and others. For "Clytie" was quite a young lady. Inheriting her mother's physical peculiarities, and in obedience to the climatic laws of the Red Mountain region, she was an early bloomer. The youth of Smith's Pocket, to whom this kind of flower was rare, sighed for her in April and languished in

May. Enamored swains haunted the schoolhouse at the hour of dismissal. A few were jealous of the master.

Perhaps it was this latter circumstance that opened the master's eyes to another. He could not help noticing that Clytie was romantic; that in school she required a great deal of attention; that her pens were uniformly bad and wanted fixing; that she usually accompanied the request with a certain expectation in her eye that was somewhat disproportionate to the quality of service she verbally required; that she sometimes allowed the curves of a round, plump white arm to rest on his when he was writing her copies; that she always blushed and flung back her blonde curls when she did so. I don't remember whether I have stated that the master was a young man, — it 's of little consequence, however; he had been severely educated in the school in which Clytie was taking her first lesson, and, on the whole, withstood the flexible curves and factitious glance like the fine young Spartan that he was. Perhaps an insufficient quality of food may have tended to this asceticism. He generally avoided Clytie; but one evening, when she returned to the school-

house after something she had forgotten, and did not find it until the master walked home with her, I hear that he endeavored to make himself particularly agreeable, — partly from the fact, I imagine, that his conduct was adding gall and bitterness to the already overcharged hearts of Clytemnestra's admirers.

The morning after this affecting episode Mliss did not come to school. Noon came, but not Mliss. Questioning Clytie on the subject, it appeared that they had left the school together, but the wilful Mliss had taken another road. The afternoon brought her not. In the evening he called on Mrs. Morpher, whose motherly heart was really alarmed. Mr. Morpher had spent all day in search of her, without discovering a trace that might lead to her discovery. Aristides was summoned as a probable accomplice, but that equitable infant succeeded in impressing the household with his innocence. Mrs. Morpher entertained a vivid impression that the child would yet be found drowned in a ditch, or, what was almost as terrible, muddied and soiled beyond the redemption of soap and water. Sick at heart, the master returned to the schoolhouse. As he lit his

lamp and seated himself at his desk, he found a note lying before him addressed to himself, in Mliss's handwriting. It seemed to be written on a leaf torn from some old memorandum-book, and, to prevent sacrilegious trifling, had been sealed with six broken wafers. Opening it almost tenderly, the master read as follows: —

RESPECTED SIR, — When you read this, I am run away. Never to come back. *Never*, NEVER, NEVER. You can give my beeds to Mary Jennings, and my Amerika's Pride [a highly colored lithograph from a tobacco-box] to Sally Flanders. But don't you give anything to Clytie Morpher. Don't you dare to. Do you know what my opinion is of her: it is this, she is perfekly disgustin. That is all and no more at present from

Yours respectfully,

MELISSA SMITH.

The master sat pondering on this strange epistle till the moon lifted its bright face above the distant hills, and illuminated the trail that led to the schoolhouse, beaten quite hard with the coming and going of little feet. Then, more satisfied in mind, he tore the missive into fragments and scattered them along the road.

At sunrise the next morning he was picking his way through the palm-like fern and thick underbrush of the pine forest, starting the hare from its form, and awakening a querulous protest from a few dissipated crows, who had evidently been making a night of it, and so came to the wooded ridge where he had once found Mliss. There he found the prostrate pine and tasselled branches, but the throne was vacant. As he drew nearer, what might have been some frightened animal started through the crackling limbs. It ran up the tossed arms of the fallen monarch, and sheltered itself in some friendly foliage. The master, reaching the old seat, found the nest still warm; looking up in the intertwining branches, he met the black eyes of the errant Mliss. They gazed at each other without speaking. She was first to break the silence.

"What do you want?" she asked curtly.

The master had decided on a course of action. "I want some crab-apples," he said humbly.

"Sha' n't have 'em! go away. Why don't you get 'em of Clytemnerestera?" (It seemed to be a relief to Mliss to express her contempt in additional syllables to that classical

young woman's already long-drawn title.) "Oh, you wicked thing!"

"I am hungry, Lissy. I have eaten nothing since dinner yesterday. I am famished!" and the young man in a state of remarkable exhaustion leaned against the tree.

Melissa's heart was touched. In the bitter days of her gypsy life she had known the sensation he so artfully simulated. Overcome by his heart-broken tone, but not entirely divested of suspicion, she said, —

"Dig under the tree near the roots, and you 'll find lots; but mind you don't tell!" (for Mliss had *her* hoards as well as the rats and squirrels.)

But the master, of course, was unable to find them; the effects of hunger probably blinding his senses. Mliss grew uneasy. At length she peered at him through the leaves in an elfish way, and questioned, —

"If I come down and give you some, you 'll promise you won't touch me?"

The master promised.

"Hope you 'll die if you do?"

The master accepted instant dissolution as a forfeit. Mliss slid down the tree. For a few moments nothing transpired but the munching of the pine-nuts. "Do you feel

better?" she asked, with some sol citude. The master confessed to a recuperated feeling, and then gravely thanking her proceeded to retrace his steps. As he expected, he had not gone far before she called him. He turned. She was standing there quite white, with tears in her widely opened orbs. The master felt that the right moment had come. Going up to her, he took both her hands, and, looking in her tearful eyes, said gravely, "Lissy, do you remember the first evening you came to see me?"

Lissy remembered.

"You asked me if you might come to school, for you wanted to learn something and be better, and I said" —

"Come," responded the child, promptly.

"What would *you* say if the master now came to you and said that he was lonely without his little scholar, and that he wanted her to come and teach him to be better?"

The child hung her head for a few moments in silence. The master waited patiently. Tempted by the quiet, a hare ran close to the couple, ar[illegible], raising her bright eyes and velvet forepaws, sat and gazed at them. A squirrel ran half-way down the furrowed bark of the fallen tree, and there stopped.

"We are waiting, Lissy," said the master, in a whisper, and the child smiled. Stirred by a passing breeze, the tree-tops rocked, and a long pencil of light stole through their interlaced boughs full on the doubting face and irresolute little figure. Suddenly she took the master's hand in her quick way. What she said was scarcely audible, but the master, putting the black hair back from her forehead, kissed her; and so, hand in hand, they passed out of the damp aisles and forest odors into the open sunlit road.

CHAPTER III.

SOMEWHAT less spiteful in her intercourse with other scholars, Mliss still retained an offensive attitude in regard to Clytemnestra. Perhaps the jealous element was not entirely lulled in her passionate little breast. Perhaps it was only that the round curves and plump outline offered more extended pinching surface. But while such ebullitions were under the master's control, her enmity occasionally took a new and irrepressible form.

The master, in his first estimate of the child's character, could not conceive that she

had ever possessed a doll. But the master, like many other professed readers of character, was safer in *à posteriori* than *à priori* reasoning. Mliss had a doll, but then it was emphatically Mliss's doll, — a smaller copy of herself. Its unhappy existence had been a secret discovered accidentally by Mrs. Morpher. It had been the old-time companion of Mliss's wanderings, and bore evident marks of suffering. Its original complexion was long since washed away by the weather and anointed by the slime of ditches. It looked very much as Mliss had in days past. Its one gown of faded stuff was dirty and ragged as hers had been. Mliss had never been known to apply to it any childish term of endearment. She never exhibited it in the presence of other children. It was put severely to bed in a hollow tree near the schoolhouse, and only allowed exercise during Mliss's rambles. Fulfilling a stern duty to her doll, as she would to herself, it knew no luxuries.

Now Mrs. Morpher, obeying a commendable impulse, bought another doll and gave it to Mliss. The child received it gravely and curiously. The master, on looking at it one day fancied he saw a slight resemblance

in its round red cheeks and mild blue eyes to Clytemnestra. It became evident before long that Mliss had also noticed the same resemblance. Accordingly she hammered its waxen head on the rocks when she was alone, and sometimes dragged it with a string round its neck to and from school. At other times, setting it up on her desk, she made a pin-cushion of its patient and inoffensive body. Whether this was done in revenge of what she considered a second figurative obtrusion of Clytie's excellences upon her, or whether she had an intuitive appreciation of the rites of certain other heathens, and, indulging in that "fetish" ceremony, imagined that the original of her wax model would pine away and finally die, is a metaphysical question I shall not now consider.

In spite of these moral vagaries, the master could not help noticing in her different tasks the working of a quick, restless, and vigorous perception. She knew neither the hesitancy nor the doubts of childhood. Her answers in class were always slightly dashed with audacity. Of course she was not infallible. But her courage and daring in passing beyond her own depth and that of the floundering little swimmers around her,

in their minds outweighed all errors of judgment. Children are not better than grown people in this respect, I fancy; and whenever the little red hand flashed above her desk, there was a wondering silence, and even the master was sometimes oppressed with a doubt of his own experience and judgment.

Nevertheless, certain attributes which at first amused and entertained his fancy began to afflict him with grave doubts. He could not but see that Mliss was revengeful, irreverent, and wilful. That there was but one better quality which pertained to her semi-savage disposition, — the faculty of physical fortitude and self-sacrifice; and another, though not always an attribute of the noble savage, — truth. Mliss was both fearless and sincere; perhaps in such a character the adjectives were synonymous.

The master had been doing some hard thinking on this subject, and had arrived at that conclusion quite common to all who think sincerely, that he was generally the slave of his own prejudices, when he determined to call on the Rev. McSnagley for advice. This decision was somewhat humiliating to his pride, as he and McSnagley were not friends. But he thought of Mliss,

and the evening of their first meeting; and perhaps with a pardonable superstition that it was not chance alone that had guided her wilful feet to the schoolhouse, and perhaps with a complacent consciousness of the rare magnanimity of the act, he choked back his dislike and went to McSnagley.

The reverend gentleman was glad to see him. Moreover, he observed that the master was looking "peartish," and hoped he had got over the "neuralgy" and "rheumatiz." He himself had been troubled with a dumb "ager" since last Conference. But he had learned to "rastle and pray."

Pausing a moment to enable the master to write his certain method of curing the dumb "ager" upon the book and volume of his brain, Mr. McSnagley proceeded to inquire after Sister Morpher. "She is an adornment to Chris*tew*anity, and has a likely growin' young family," added Mr. McSnagley; "and there 's that mannerly young gal, — so well behaved, — Miss Clytie." In fact, Clytie's perfections seemed to affect him to such an extent that he dwelt for several minutes upon them. The master was doubly embarrassed. In the first place, there was an enforced contrast with poor Mliss in all

this praise of Clytie. Secondly, there was something unpleasantly confidential in his tone of speaking of Mrs. Morpher's earliest born. So that the master, after a few futile efforts to say something natural, found it convenient to recall another engagement, and left without asking the information required, but in his after reflections somewhat unjustly giving the Rev. Mr. McSnagley the full benefit of having refused it.

Perhaps this rebuff placed the master and pupil once more in the close communion of old. The child seemed to notice the change in the master's manner, which had of late been constrained, and in one of their long post-prandial walks she stopped suddenly, and, mounting a stump, looked full in his face with big, searching eyes. "You ain't mad?" said she, with an interrogative shake of the black braids. "No." "Nor bothered?" "No." "Nor hungry?" (Hunger was to Mliss a sickness that might attack a person at any moment.) "No." "Nor thinking of her?" "Of whom, Lissy?" "That white girl." (This was the latest epithet invented by Mliss, who was a very dark brunette, to express Clytemnestra.) "No." "Upon your word?" (A substitute

for "Hope you'll die?" proposed by the master.) "Yes." "And sacred honor?" "Yes." Then Mliss gave him a fierce little kiss, and, hopping down, fluttered off. For two or three days after that she condescended to appear more like other children, and be, as she expressed it, "good."

Two years had passed since the master's advent at Smith's Pocket, and as his salary was not large, and the prospects of Smith's Pocket eventually becoming the capital of the State not entirely definite, he contemplated a change. He had informed the school trustees privately of his intentions, but, educated young men of unblemished moral character being scarce at that time, he consented to continue his school term through the winter to early spring. None else knew of his intention except his one friend, a Dr. Duchesne, a young Creole physician, known to the people of Wingdam as "Duchesny." He never mentioned it to Mrs. Morpher, Clytie, or any of his scholars. His reticence was partly the result of a constitutional indisposition to fuss, partly a desire to be spared the questions and surmises of vulgar curiosity, and partly that he never really believed he was going to do anything before it was done.

He did not like to think of Mliss. It was a selfish instinct, perhaps, which made him try to fancy his feeling for the child was foolish, romantic, and unpractical. He even tried to imagine that she would do better under the control of an older and sterner teacher. Then she was nearly eleven, and in a few years, by the rules of Red Mountain, would be a woman. He had done his duty. After Smith's death he addressed letters to Smith's relatives, and received one answer from a sister of Melissa's mother. Thanking the master, she stated her intention of leaving the Atlantic States for California with her husband in a few months. This was a slight superstructure for the airy castle which the master pictured for Mliss's home, but it was easy to fancy that some loving, sympathetic woman, with the claims of kindred, might better guide her wayward nature. Yet, when the master had read the letter, Mliss listened to it carelessly, received it submissively, and afterwards cut figures out of it with her scissors, supposed to represent Clytemnestra, labelled "the white girl," to prevent mistakes, and impaled them upon the outer walls of the schoolhouse.

When the summer was about spent, and

the last harvest had been gathered in the valleys, the master bethought him of gathering in a few ripened shoots of the young idea, and of having his harvest-home, or examination. So the savans and professionals of Smith's Pocket were gathered to witness that time-honored custom of placing timid children in a constrained position, and bullying them as in a witness-box. As usual in such cases, the most audacious and self-possessed were the lucky recipients of the honors. The reader will imagine that in the present instance Mliss and Clytie were pre-eminent, and divided public attention: Mliss with her clearness of material perception and self-reliance, Clytie with her placid self-esteem and saint-like correctness of deportment. The other little ones were timid and blundering. Mliss's readiness and brilliancy, of course, captivated the greatest number and provoked the greatest applause. Mliss's antecedents had unconsciously awakened the strongest sympathies of a class whose athletic forms were ranged against the walls, or whose handsome bearded faces looked in at the windows. But Mliss's popularity was overthrown by an unexpected circumstance.

McSnagley had invited himself, and had

been going through the pleasing entertainment of frightening the more timid pupils by the vaguest and most ambiguous questions delivered in an impressive funereal tone; and Mliss had soared into astronomy, and was tracking the course of our spotted ball through space, and keeping time with the music of the spheres, and defining the tethered orbits of the planets, when McSnagley impressively arose. "Meelissy! ye were speaking of the revolutions of this yere yearth and the move-*ments* of the sun, and I think ye said it had been a doing of it since the creashun, eh?" Mliss nodded a scornful affirmative. "Well, war that the truth?" said McSnagley, folding his arms. "Yes," said Mliss, shutting up her little red lips tightly. The handsome outlines at the windows peered further in the schoolroom, and a saintly Raphael face, with blonde beard and soft blue eyes, belonging to the biggest scamp in the diggings, turned toward the child and whispered, "Stick to it, Mliss!" The reverend gentleman heaved a deep sigh, and cast a compassionate glance at the master, then at the children, and then rested his look on Clytie. That young woman softly elevated her round, white arm. Its seductive

curves were enhanced by a gorgeous and massive specimen bracelet, the gift of one of her humblest worshippers, worn in honor of the occasion. There was a momentary silence. Clytie's round cheeks were very pink and soft. Clytie's big eyes were very bright and blue. Clytie's low-necked white book-muslin rested softly on Clytie's white, plump shoulders. Clytie looked at the master, and the master nodded. Then Clytie spoke softly: —

"Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him!" There was a low hum of applause in the schoolroom, a triumphant expression on McSnagley's face, a grave shadow on the master's, and a comical look of disappointment reflected from the windows. Mliss skimmed rapidly over her Astronomy, and then shut the book with a loud snap. A groan burst from McSnagley, an expression of astonishment from the schoolroom, a yell from the windows, as Mliss brought her red fist down on the desk, with the emphatic declaration, —

"It 's a d—n lie. I don't believe it!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE long wet season had drawn near its close. Signs of spring were visible in the swelling buds and rushing torrents. The pine forests exhaled the fresher spicery. The azaleas were already budding, the ceanothus getting ready its lilac livery for spring. On the green upland which climbed Red Mountain at its southern aspect the long spike of the monk's-hood shot up from its broad-leaved stool, and once more shook its dark-blue bells. Again the billow above Smith's grave was soft and green, its crest just tossed with the foam of daisies and buttercups. The little graveyard had gathered a few new dwellers in the past year, and the mounds were placed two by two by the little paling until they reached Smith's grave, and there there was but one. General superstition had shunned it, and the plot beside Smith was vacant.

There had been several placards posted about the town, intimating that, at a certain period, a celebrated dramatic company would perform, for a few days, a series of "side-splitting" and "screaming" farces; that,

alternating pleasantly with this, there would be some melodrama and a grand divertisement, which would include singing, dancing, etc. These announcements occasioned a great fluttering among the little folk, and were the theme of much excitement and great speculation among the master's scholars. The master had promised Mliss, to whom this sort of thing was sacred and rare, that she should go, and on that momentous evening the master and Mliss "assisted."

The performance was the prevalent style of heavy mediocrity; the melodrama was not bad enough to laugh at nor good enough to excite. But the master, turning wearily to the child, was astonished, and felt something like self-accusation, in noticing the peculiar effect upon her excitable nature. The red blood flushed in her cheeks at each stroke of her panting little heart. Her small passionate lips were slightly parted to give vent to her hurried breath. Her widely opened lids threw up and arched her black eyebrows. She did not laugh at the dismal comicalities of the funny man, for Mliss seldom laughed. Nor was she discreetly affected to the delicate extremes of the corner of a white handkerchief, as was the tender-

hearted "Clytie," who was talking with her "feller" and ogling the master at the same moment. But when the performance was over, and the green curtain fell on the little stage, Mliss drew a long, deep breath, and turned to the master's grave face with a half-apologetic smile and wearied gesture. Then she said, "Now take me home!" and dropped the lids of her black eyes, as if to dwell once more in fancy on the mimic stage.

On their way to Mrs. Morpher's the master thought proper to ridicule the whole performance. Now he should n't wonder if Mliss thought that the young lady who acted so beautifully was really in earnest, and in love with the gentleman who wore such fine clothes. Well, if she were in love with him it was a very unfortunate thing! "Why?" said Mliss, with an upward sweep of the drooping lid. "Oh! well, he could n't support his wife at his present salary, and pay so much a week for his fine clothes, and then they would n't receive as much wages if they were married as if they were merely lovers, — that is," added the master, "if they are not already married to somebody else; but I think the husband of the pretty young

countess takes the tickets at the door, or pulls up the curtain, or snuffs the candles, or does something equally refined and elegant. As to the young man with nice clothes, which are really nice now, and must cost at least two and a half or three dollars, not to speak of that mantle of red drugget, which I happen to know the price of, for I bought some of it for my room once, — as to this young man, Lissy, he is a pretty good fellow, and if he does drink occasionally, I don't think people ought to take advantage of it, and give him black eyes and throw him in the mud. Do you? I am sure he might owe me two dollars and a half a long time before I would throw it up in his face, as the fellow did the other night at Wingdam."

Mliss had taken his hand in both of hers and was trying to look in his eyes, which the young man kept as resolutely averted. Mliss had a faint idea of irony, indulging herself sometimes in a species of sardonic humor, which was equally visible in her actions and speech. But the young man continued in this strain until they had reached Mrs. Morpher's, and he had deposited Mliss in her maternal charge. Waiving the invita-

tion of Mrs. Morpher to refreshment and rest, and shading his eyes with his hand to keep out the blue-eyed Clytemnestra's siren glances, he excused himself, and went home.

For two or three days after the advent of the dramatic company, Mliss was late at school, and the master's usual Friday afternoon ramble was for once omitted, owing to the absence of his trustworthy guide. As he was putting away his books and preparing to leave the schoolhouse, a small voice piped at his side, "Please, sir!" The master turned, and there stood Aristides Morpher.

"Well, my little man," said the master, impatiently, "what is it? — quick!"

"Please, sir, me and 'Kerg' thinks that Mliss is going to run away agin."

"What 's that, sir?" said the master, with that unjust testiness with which we always receive disagreeable news.

"Why, sir, she don't stay home any more, and 'Kerg' and me see her talking with one of those actor fellers, and she 's with him now; and please, sir, yesterday she told 'Kerg' and me she could make a speech as well as Miss Cellerstina Montmoressy, and she spouted right off by heart," and the little fellow paused in a collapsed condition.

"What actor?" asked the master.

"Him as wears the shiny hat. And hair. And gold pin. And gold chain," said the just Aristides, putting periods for commas to eke out his breath.

The master put on his gloves and hat, feeling an unpleasant tightness in his chest and thorax, and walked out in the road. Aristides trotted along by his side, endeavoring to keep pace with his short legs to the master's strides, when the master stopped suddenly, and Aristides bumped up against him. "Where were they talking?" asked the master, as if continuing the conversation.

"At the Arcade," said Aristides.

When they reached the main street the master paused. "Run down home," said he to the boy. "If Mliss is there, come to the Arcade and tell me. If she is n't there, stay home; run!" And off trotted the short-legged Aristides.

The Arcade was just across the way, — a long, rambling building containing a bar-room, billiard-room, and restaurant. As the young man crossed the plaza he noticed that two or three of the passers-by turned and looked after him. He looked at his clothes, took out his handkerchief and wiped his face

before he entered the bar-room. It contained the usual number of loungers, who stared at him as he entered. One of them looked at him so fixedly and with such a strange expression that the master stopped and looked again, and then saw it was only his own reflection in a large mirror. This made the master think that perhaps he was a little excited, and so he took up a copy of the Red Mountain Banner from one of the tables, and tried to recover his composure by reading the column of advertisements.

He then walked through the bar-room, through the restaurant, and into the billiard-room. The child was not there. In the latter apartment a person was standing by one of the tables with a broad-brimmed glazed hat on his head. The master recognized him as the agent of the dramatic company; he had taken a dislike to him at their first meeting, from the peculiar fashion of wearing his beard and hair. Satisfied that the object of his search was not there, he turned to the man with the glazed hat. He had noticed the master, but tried that common trick of unconsciousness, in which vulgar natures always fail. Balancing a billiard-cue in his hand, he pretended to play with a ball in the

centre of the table. The master stood opposite to him until he raised his eyes; when their glances met, the master walked up to him.

He had intended to avoid a scene or quarrel, but when he began to speak something kept rising in his throat and retarded his utterance, and his own voice frightened him, it sounded so distant, low, and resonant.

"I understand," he began, "that Melissa Smith, an orphan, and one of my scholars, has talked with you about adopting your profession. Is that so?"

The man with the glazed hat leaned over the table, and made an imaginary shot, that sent the ball spinning round the cushions. Then walking round the table he recovered the ball and placed it upon the spot. This duty discharged, getting ready for another shot, he said, —

"S'pose she has?"

The master choked up again, but, squeezing the cushion of the table in his gloved hand, he went on: —

"If you are a gentleman, I have only to tell you that I am her guardian, and responsible for her career. You know as well as I do the kind of life you offer her. As you

may learn of any one here, I have already brought her out of an existence worse than death, — out of the streets and the contamination of vice. I am trying to do so again. Let us talk like men. She has neither father, mother, sister, or brother. Are you seeking to give her an equivalent for these?"

The man with the glazed hat examined the point of his cue, and then looked around for somebody to enjoy the joke with him.

"I know that she is a strange, wilful girl," continued the master, "but she is better than she was. I believe that I have some influence over her still. I beg and hope, therefore, that you will take no further steps in this matter, but as a man, as a gentleman, leave her to me. I am willing" — But here something rose again in the master's throat, and the sentence remained unfinished.

The man with the glazed hat, mistaking the master's silence, raised his head with a coarse, brutal laugh, and said in a loud voice, —

"Want her yourself, do you? That cock won't fight here, young man!"

The insult was more in the tone than the words, more in the glance than tone, and

more in the man's instinctive nature than all these. The best appreciable rhetoric to this kind of animal is a blow. The master felt this, and, with his pent-up, nervous energy finding expression in the one act, he struck the brute full in his grinning face. The blow sent the glazed hat one way and the cue another, and tore the glove and skin from the master's hand from knuckle to joint. It opened up the corners of the fellow's mouth, and spoilt the peculiar shape of his beard for some time to come.

There was a shout, an imprecation, a scuffle, and the trampling of many feet. Then the crowd parted right and left, and two sharp quick reports followed each other in rapid succession. Then they closed again about his opponent, and the master was standing alone. He remembered picking bits of burning wadding from his coat-sleeve with his left hand. Some one was holding his other hand. Looking at it, he saw it was still bleeding from the blow, but his fingers were clenched around the handle of a glittering knife. He could not remember when or how he got it.

The man who was holding his hand was Mr. Morpher. He hurried the master to

the door, but the master held back, and tried to tell him as well as he could with his parched throat about "Mliss." "It 's all right, my boy," said Mr. Morpher. "She 's home!" And they passed out into the street together. As they walked along, Mr. Morpher said that Mliss had come running into the house a few moments before, and had dragged him out, saying that somebody was trying to kill the master at the Arcade. Wishing to be alone, the master promised Mr. Morpher that he would not seek the agent again that night, and parted from him, taking the road toward the schoolhouse. He was surprised on nearing it to find the door open; still more surprised to find Mliss sitting there.

The master's nature, as I have hinted before, had, like most sensitive organizations, a selfish basis. The brutal taunt thrown out by his late adversary still rankled in his heart. It was possible, he thought, that such a construction might be put upon his affection for the child, which at best was foolish and Quixotic. Besides, had she not voluntarily abnegated his authority and affection? And what had everybody else said about her? Why should he alone combat the opin-

ion of all, and be at last obliged tacitly to confess the truth of all they had predicted? And he had been a participant in a low bar-room fight with a common boor, and risked his life, to prove what? What had he proved? Nothing! What would the people say? What would his friends say? What would McSnagley say?

In his self-accusation the last person he should have wished to meet was Mliss. He entered the door, and, going up to his desk, told the child, in a few cold words, that he was busy, and wished to be alone. As she rose he took her vacant seat, and, sitting down, buried his head in his hands. When he looked up again she was still standing there. She was looking at his face with an anxious expression.

"Did you kill him?" she asked.

"No!" said the master.

"That 's what I gave you the knife for!" said the child, quickly.

"Gave me the knife?" repeated the master, in bewilderment.

"Yes, gave you the knife. I was there under the bar. Saw you hit him. Saw you both fall. He dropped his old knife. I gave it to you. Why did n't you stick him?"

said Mliss rapidly, with an expressive twinkle of the black eyes and a gesture of the little red hand.

The master could only look his astonishment.

"Yes," said Mliss. "If you 'd asked me, I 'd told you I was off with the play-actors. Why was I off with the play-actors? Because you would n't tell me you was going away. I knew it. I heard you tell the Doctor so. I was n't a goin' to stay here alone with those Morphers. I 'd rather die first."

With a dramatic gesture which was perfectly consistent with her character, she drew from her bosom a few limp green leaves, and, holding them out at arm's-length, said in her quick vivid way, and in the queer pronunciation of her old life, which she fell into when unduly excited, —

"That 's the poison plant you said would kill me. I 'll go with the play-actors, or I 'll eat this and die here. I don't care which. I won't stay here, where they hate and despise me! Neither would you let me if you did n't hate and despise me too!"

The passionate little breast heaved, and two big tears peeped over the edge of Mliss's eyelids, but she whisked them away with the

corner of her apron as if they had been wasps.

"If you lock me up in jail," said Mliss fiercely, "to keep me from the play-actors, I 'll poison myself. Father killed himself, — why should n't I? You said a mouthful of that root would kill me, and I always carry it here," and she struck her breast with her clenched fist.

The master thought of the vacant plot beside Smith's grave, and of the passionate little figure before him. Seizing her hands in his and looking full into her truthful eyes, he said, —

"Lissy, will you go with *me?*"

The child put her arms around his neck, and said joyfully, "Yes."

"But now — to-night?"

"To-night!"

And, hand in hand, they passed into the road, — the narrow road that had once brought her weary feet to the master's door, and which it seemed she should not tread again alone. The stars glittered brightly above them. For good or ill the lesson had been learned, and behind them the school of Red Mountain closed upon them forever.

THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT.

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the 23d of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause was another question. "I reckon they 're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it 's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after

somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example, and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets of the sums he had won from them. "It 's agin justice," said Jim Wheeler, "to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp — an entire stranger — carry away our money." But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the

breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept fate. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman familiarly known as the "Duchess;" another who had won the title of "Mother Shipton;" and "Uncle Billy," a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good-humor characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse, "Five Spot," for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of "Five Spot" with malevolence, and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar — a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants — lay over a steep mountain

range. It was distant a day's severe travel. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foot-hills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of "throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence.

Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "could n't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow-exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah-trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him; at the sky, ominously clouded; at the valley below, already deepening into shadow. And, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the new-comer Mr. Oakhurst recognized Tom Simson, otherwise known as the "Innocent," of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a "little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune — amounting to some forty dollars — of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door and thus addressed him: "Tommy, you 're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. "Alone?" No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Did n't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected, and so

they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp, and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognize in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavored to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log-house near the trail. "Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, "and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire — for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast — in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive, girlish fashion to the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. "Is this yer a d—d picnic?" said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the

mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine-boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it, — snow!

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered; they were no longer

there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humored, freckled face; the virgin Piney slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians, and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snowflakes, that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words, — "Snowed in!"

A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence they might last ten days longer. "That is," said Mr. Oakhurst, *sotto voce* to the Innocent, "if you 're willing to board us. If you ain't — and perhaps you 'd better not — you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with pro-

visions." For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate's defection. "They 'll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything," he added, significantly, "and there 's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. "We 'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow 'll melt, and we 'll all go back together." The cheerful gayety of the young man and Mr. Oakhurst's calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine-boughs, extemporized a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you 're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned

away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheeks through their professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whiskey, which he had prudently *cachéd*. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whiskey," said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm and the group around it that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr. Oakhurst had *cachéd* his cards with the whiskey as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "did n't say cards once" during that evening. Haply the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of

bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Covenanter's swing to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain: —

> "I 'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
> And I 'm bound to die in His army."

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson, somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent by saying that he had "often been a week without sleep." "Doing what?" asked Tom. "Poker!" replied Oakhurst, sententiously; "when a man gets a streak of luck, — nigger-luck, —

he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler, reflectively, "is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it 's bound to change. And it 's finding out when it 's going to change that makes you. We 've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat, — you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along, you 're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance, —

> "'I 'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
> And I 'm bound to die in His army.'"

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut, — a hopeless, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvellously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and

from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess. "Just you go out there and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing "the child," as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she did n't swear and was n't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering camp-fire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney, story-telling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed, too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope's ingenious translation of the Iliad. He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents

of that poem — having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words — in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus. Mr. Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snowflakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr.

Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney. Only Mother Shipton — once the strongest of the party — seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side. "I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head and open it." Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched. "Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney. "You 've starved yourself," said the gambler. "That 's what they call it," said the woman, querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside and showed him a pair of snow-shoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle. "There 's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it 's there," he added,

pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days she 's safe." "And you?" asked Tom Simson. "I 'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace. "You are not going, too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him. "As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke; but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting pines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?" "No, dear," said Piney, simply. The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine-boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told, from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of

Poker Flat recognized this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil, in a firm hand : —

†

BENEATH THIS TREE
LIES THE BODY
OF
JOHN OAKHURST,
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK
ON THE 23D OF NOVEMBER, 1850,
AND
HANDED IN HIS CHECKS
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850.

†

And pulseless and cold, with a derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

MIGGLES.

We were eight, including the driver. We had not spoken during the passage of the last six miles, since the jolting of the heavy vehicle over the roughening road had spoiled the Judge's last poetical quotation. The tall man beside the Judge was asleep, his arm passed through the swaying strap and his head resting upon it, — altogether a limp, helpless-looking object, as if he had hanged himself and been cut down too late. The French lady on the back seat was asleep, too, yet in a half-conscious propriety of attitude, shown even in the disposition of the handkerchief which she held to her forehead and which partially veiled her face. The lady from Virginia City, travelling with her husband, had long since lost all individuality in a wild confusion of ribbons, veils, furs, and shawls. There was no sound but the rattling of wheels and the dash of rain upon the roof. Suddenly the stage stopped and

we became dimly aware of voices. The driver was evidently in the midst of an exciting colloquy with some one in the road, — a colloquy of which such fragments as "bridge gone," "twenty feet of water," "can't pass," were occasionally distinguishable above the storm. Then came a lull, and a mysterious voice from the road shouted the parting adjuration, —

"Try Miggles's."

We caught a glimpse of our leaders as the vehicle slowly turned, of a horseman vanishing through the rain, and we were evidently on our way to Miggles's.

Who and where was Miggles? The Judge, our authority, did not remember the name, and he knew the country thoroughly. The Washoe traveller thought Miggles must keep a hotel. We only knew that we were stopped by high water in front and rear, and that Miggles was our rock of refuge. A ten minutes' splashing through a tangled by-road, scarcely wide enough for the stage, and we drew up before a barred and boarded gate in a wide stone wall or fence about eight feet high. Evidently Miggles's, and evidently Miggles did not keep a hotel.

The driver got down and tried the gate. It was securely locked.

"Miggles! O Miggles!"

No answer.

"Migg-ells! You Miggles!" continued the driver, with rising wrath.

"Migglesy!" joined in the expressman, persuasively. "O Miggy! Mig!"

But no reply came from the apparently insensible Miggles. The Judge, who had finally got the window down, put his head out and propounded a series of questions, which, if answered categorically, would have undoubtedly elucidated the whole mystery, but which the driver evaded by replying that "if we did n't want to sit in the coach all night, we had better rise up and sing out for Miggles."

So we rose up and called on Miggles in chorus; then separately. And when we had finished, a Hibernian fellow-passenger from the roof called for "Maygells!" whereat we all laughed. While we were laughing, the driver cried "Shoo!"

We listened. To our infinite amazement the chorus of "Miggles" was repeated from the other side of the wall, even to the final and supplemental "Maygells."

"Extraordinary echo," said the Judge.

"Extraordinary d—d skunk!" roared the

driver, contemptuously. "Come out of that, Miggles, and show yourself! Be a man, Miggles! Don't hide in the dark; I would n't if I were you, Miggles," continued Yuba Bill, now dancing about in an excess of fury.

"Miggles!" continued the voice, "O Miggles!"

"My good man! Mr. Myghail!" said the Judge, softening the asperities of the name as much as possible, "consider the inhospitality of refusing shelter from the inclemency of the weather to helpless females. Really, my dear sir" — But a succession of "Miggles," ending in a burst of laughter, drowned his voice.

Yuba Bill hesitated no longer. Taking a heavy stone from the road, he battered down the gate, and, with the expressman, entered the enclosure. We followed. Nobody was to be seen. In the gathering darkness all that we could distinguish was that we were in a garden — from the rose-bushes that scattered over us a minute spray from their dripping leaves — and before a long, rambling wooden building.

"Do you know this Miggles?" asked the Judge of Yuba Bill.

"No, nor don't want to," said Bill, shortly,

who felt the Pioneer Stage Company insulted in his person by the contumacious Miggles.

"But, my dear sir," expostulated the Judge, as he thought of the barred gate.

"Lookee here," said Yuba Bill, with fine irony, "had n't you better go back and sit in the coach till yer introduced? I 'm going in," and he pushed open the door of the building.

A long room lighted only by the embers of a fire that was dying on the large hearth at its farther extremity; the walls curiously papered, and the flickering firelight bringing out its grotesque pattern; somebody sitting in a large arm-chair by the fireplace. All this we saw as we crowded together into the room, after the driver and expressman.

"Hello! be you Miggles?" said Yuba Bill to the solitary occupant.

The figure neither spoke nor stirred. Yuba Bill walked wrathfully toward it, and turned the eye of his coach-lantern upon its face. It was a man's face, prematurely old and wrinkled, with very large eyes, in which there was that expression of perfectly gratuitous solemnity which I had sometimes seen in an owl's. The large eyes wandered

from Bill's face to the lantern, and finally fixed their gaze on that luminous object, without further recognition.

Bill restrained himself with an effort.

"Miggles! Be you deaf? You ain't dumb, anyhow, you know?" and Yuba Bill shook the insensate figure by the shoulder.

To our great dismay, as Bill removed his hand, the venerable stranger apparently collapsed, — sinking into half his size and an undistinguishable heap of clothing.

"Well, dern my skin!" said Bill, looking appealingly at us, and hopelessly retiring from the contest.

The Judge now stepped forward, and we lifted the mysterious invertebrate back into his original position. Bill was dismissed with the lantern to reconnoitre outside, for it was evident that from the helplessness of this solitary man there must be attendants near at hand, and we all drew around the fire. The Judge, who had regained his authority, and had never lost his conversational amiability, — standing before us with his back to the hearth, — charged us, as an imaginary jury, as follows: —

"It is evident that either our distinguished friend here has reached that condition de-

scribed by Shakespeare as 'the sere and yellow leaf,' or has suffered some premature abatement of his mental and physical faculties. Whether he is really the Miggles" —

Here he was interrupted by "Miggles! O Miggles! Migglesy! Mig!" and in fact the whole chorus of Miggles in very much the same key as it had once before been delivered unto us.

We gazed at each other for a moment in some alarm. The Judge, in particular, vacated his position quickly, as the voice seemed to come directly over his shoulder. The cause, however, was soon discovered in a large magpie who was perched upon a shelf over the fireplace, and who immediately relapsed into a sepulchral silence, which contrasted singularly with his previous volubility. It was undoubtedly his voice which we had heard in the road, and our friend in the chair was not responsible for the discourtesy. Yuba Bill, who reëntered the room after an unsuccessful search, was loath to accept the explanation, and still eyed the helpless sitter with suspicion. He had found a shed in which he had put up his horses, but came back dripping and skeptical. "Thar ain't nobody but him within ten mile

of the shanty, and that 'ar d—d old skee-sicks knows it."

But the faith of the majority proved to be securely based. Bill had scarcely ceased growling before we heard a quick step upon the porch, the trailing of a wet skirt, the door was flung open, and with a flash of white teeth, a sparkle of dark eyes, and an utter absence of ceremony or diffidence, a young woman entered, shut the door, and, panting, leaned back against it.

"Oh, if you please, I 'm Miggles!"

And this was Miggles! this bright-eyed, full-throated young woman, whose wet gown of coarse blue stuff could not hide the beauty of the feminine curves to which it clung; from the chestnut crown of whose head, topped by a man's oil-skin sou'wester, to the little feet and ankles, hidden somewhere in the recesses of her boy's brogans, all was grace; — this was Miggles, laughing at us, too, in the most airy, frank, off-hand manner imaginable.

"You see, boys," said she, quite out of breath, and holding one little hand against her side, quite unheeding the speechless discomfiture of our party, or the complete demoralization of Yuba Bill, whose features

had relaxed into an expression of gratuitous and imbecile cheerfulness, — "you see, boys, I was mor'n two miles away when you passed down the road. I thought you might pull up here, and so I ran the whole way, knowing nobody was home but Jim, — and — and — I 'm out of breath — and — that lets me out."

And here Miggles caught her dripping oil-skin hat from her head, with a mischievous swirl that scattered a shower of raindrops over us; attempted to put back her hair; dropped two hair-pains in the attempt; laughed, and sat down beside Yuba Bill, with her hands crossed lightly on her lap.

The Judge recovered himself first, and essayed an extravagant compliment.

"I 'll trouble you for that har-pin," said Miggles, gravely. Half a dozen hands were eagerly stretched forward; the missing hair-pin was restored to its fair owner; and Miggles, crossing the room, looked keenly in the face of the invalid. The solemn eyes looked back at hers with an expression we had never seen before. Life and intelligence seemed to struggle back into the rugged face. Miggles laughed again, — it was

a singularly eloquent laugh, — and turned her black eyes and white teeth once more towards us.

"This afflicted person is" — hesitated the Judge.

"Jim!" said Miggles.

"Your father?"

"No."

"Brother?"

"No."

"Husband?"

Miggles darted a quick, half-defiant glance at the two lady passengers, who I had noticed did not participate in the general masculine admiration of Miggles, and said, gravely, "No; it 's Jim."

There was an awkward pause. The lady passengers moved closer to each other; the Washoe husband looked abstractedly at the fire; and the tall man apparently turned his eyes inward for self-support at this emergency. But Miggles's laugh, which was very infectious, broke the silence. "Come," she said briskly, "you must be hungry. Who 'll bear a hand to help me get tea?"

She had no lack of volunteers. In a few moments Yuba Bill was engaged like Caliban in bearing logs for this Miranda; the

expressman was grinding coffee on the veranda; to myself the arduous duty of slicing bacon was assigned; and the Judge lent each man his good-humored and voluble counsel. And when Miggles, assisted by the Judge and our Hibernian "deck passenger," set the table with all the available crockery, we had become quite joyous, in spite of the rain that beat against windows, the wind that whirled down the chimney, the two ladies who whispered together in the corner, or the magpie who uttered a satirical and croaking commentary on their conversation from his perch above. In the now bright, blazing fire we could see that the walls were papered with illustrated journals, arranged with feminine taste and discrimination. The furniture was extemporized and adapted from candle-boxes and packing-cases, and covered with gay calico or the skin of some animal. The arm-chair of the helpless Jim was an ingenious variation of a flour-barrel. There was neatness, and even a taste for the picturesque, to be seen in the few details of the long, low room.

The meal was a culinary success. But more, it was a social triumph, — chiefly, I

think, owing to the rare tact of Miggles in guiding the conversation, asking all the questions herself, yet bearing throughout a frankness that rejected the idea of any concealment on her own part; so that we talked of ourselves, of our prospects, of the journey, of the weather, of each other, — of everything but our host and hostess. It must be confessed that Miggles's conversation was never elegant, rarely grammatical, and that at times she employed expletives the use of which had generally been yielded to our sex. But they were delivered with such a lighting up of teeth and eyes, and were usually followed by a laugh — a laugh peculiar to Miggles — so frank and honest that it seemed to clear the moral atmosphere.

Once during the meal we heard a noise like the rubbing of a heavy body against the outer walls of the house. This was shortly followed by a scratching and sniffling at the door. "That 's Joaquin," said Miggles, in reply to our questioning glances; "would you like to see him?" Before we could answer she had opened the door, and disclosed a half-grown grizzly, who instantly raised himself on his haunches, with his fore-paws hanging down in the popular at-

titude of mendicancy, and looking admiringly at Miggles, with a very singular resemblance in his manner to Yuba Bill. "That 's my watch-dog," said Miggles, in explanation. "Oh, he don't bite," she added, as the two lady passengers fluttered into a corner. "Does he, old Toppy?" (the latter remark being addressed directly to the sagacious Joaquin). "I tell you what, boys," continued Miggles, after she had fed and closed the door on *Ursa Minor*, "you were in big luck that Joaquin was n't hanging round when you dropped in to-night." "Where was he?" asked the Judge. "With me," said Miggles. "Lord love you! he trots round with me nights like as if he was a man."

We were silent for a few moments, and listened to the wind. Perhaps we all had the same picture before us, — of Miggles walking through the rainy woods, with her savage guardian at her side. The Judge, I remember, said something about Una and her lion; but Miggles received it, as she did other compliments, with quiet gravity. Whether she was altogether unconscious of the admiration she excited, — she could hardly have been oblivious of Yuba Bill's

adoration, — I know not; but her very frankness suggested a perfect sexual equality that was cruelly humiliating to the younger members of our party.

The incident of the bear did not add anything in Miggles's favor to the opinions of those of her own sex who were present. In fact, the repast over, a chillness radiated from the two lady passengers that no pine-boughs brought in by Yuba Bill and cast as a sacrifice upon the hearth could wholly overcome. Miggles felt it; and suddenly declaring that it was time to "turn in," offered to show the ladies to their bed in an adjoining room. "You, boys, will have to camp out here by the fire as well as you can," she added, "for thar ain't but the one room."

Our sex — by which, my dear sir, I allude of course to the stronger portion of humanity — has been generally relieved from the imputation of curiosity, or a fondness for gossip. Yet I am constrained to say that hardly had the door closed on Miggles than we crowded together, whispering, snickering, smiling, and exchanging suspicions, surmises, and a thousand speculations in regard to our pretty hostess and her singular com-

panion. I fear that we even hustled that imbecile paralytic, who sat like a voiceless Memnon in our midst, gazing with the serene indifference of the Past in his passionless eyes upon our wordy counsels. In the midst of an exciting discussion the door opened again and Miggles reëntered.

But not, apparently, the same Miggles who a few hours before had flashed upon us. Her eyes were downcast, and as she hesitated for a moment on the threshold, with a blanket on her arm, she seemed to have left behind her the frank fearlessness which had charmed us a moment before. Coming into the room, she drew a low stool beside the paralytic's chair, sat down, drew the blanket over her shoulders, and saying, "If it 's all the same to you, boys, as we 're rather crowded, I 'll stop here to-night," took the invalid's withered hand in her own, and turned her eyes upon the dying fire. An instinctive feeling that this was only premonitory to more confidential relations, and perhaps some shame at our previous curiosity, kept us silent. The rain still beat upon the roof, wandering gusts of wind stirred the embers into momentary brightness, until, in a lull of the elements, Miggles suddenly

lifted up her head, and, throwing her hair over her shoulder, turned her face upon the group and asked, —

"Is there any of you that knows me?"

There was no reply.

"Think again! I lived at Marysville in '53. Everybody knew me there, and everybody had the right to know me. I kept the Polka Saloon until I came to live with Jim. That's six years ago. Perhaps I've changed some."

The absence of recognition may have disconcerted her. She turned her head to the fire again, and it was some seconds before she again spoke, and then more rapidly: —

"Well, you see I thought some of you must have known me. There's no great harm done, any way. What I was going to say was this: Jim here" — she took his hand in both of hers as she spoke — "used to know me, if you didn't, and spent a heap of money upon me. I reckon he spent all he had. And one day — it's six years ago this winter — Jim came into my back room, sat down on my sofy, like as you see him in that chair, and never moved again without help. He was struck all of a heap, and never seemed to know what ailed him. The

doctors came and said as how it was caused all along of his way of life, — for Jim was mighty free and wild like, — and that he would never get better, and could n't last long any way. They advised me to send him to Frisco to the hospital, for he was no good to any one and would be a baby all his life. Perhaps it was something in Jim's eye, perhaps it was that I never had a baby, but I said 'No.' I was rich then, for I was popular with everybody, — gentlemen like yourself, sir, came to see me, — and I sold out my business and bought this yer place, because it was sort of out of the way of travel, you see, and I brought my baby here."

With a woman's intuitive tact and poetry, she had, as she spoke, slowly shifted her position so as to bring the mute figure of the ruined man between her and her audience, hiding in the shadow behind it, as if she offered it as a tacit apology for her actions. Silent and expressionless, it yet spoke for her; helpless, crushed, and smitten with the Divine thunderbolt, it still stretched an invisible arm around her.

Hidden in the darkness, but still holding his hand, she went on: —

"It was a long time before I could get

the hang of things about yer, for I was used to company and excitement. I could n't get any woman to help me, and a man I dursn't trust; but what with the Indians hereabout, who 'd do odd jobs for me, and having everything sent from the North Fork, Jim and I managed to worry through. The Doctor would run up from Sacramento once in a while. He 'd ask to see 'Miggles's baby,' as he called Jim, and when he 'd go away he 'd say, 'Miggles, you 're a trump, — God bless you!' and it did n't seem so lonely after that. But the last time he was here he said, as he opened the door to go, 'Do you know, Miggles, your baby will grow up to be a man yet and an honor to his mother; but not here, Miggles, not here!' And I thought he went away sad, — and — and " — and here Miggles's voice and head were somehow both lost completely in the shadow.

"The folks about here are very kind," said Miggles, after a pause, coming a little into the light again. "The men from the fork used to hang around here, until they found they was n't wanted, and the women are kind, — and don't call. I was pretty lonely until I picked up Joaquin in the woods

yonder one day, when he was n't so high, and taught him to beg for his dinner; and then thar 's Polly — that 's the magpie — she knows no end of tricks, and makes it quite sociable of evenings with her talk, and so I don't feel like as I was the only living being about the ranch. And Jim here," said Miggles, with her old laugh again, and coming quite out into the firelight, "Jim — why, boys, you would admire to see how much he knows for a man like him. Sometimes I bring him flowers, and he looks at 'em just as natural as if he knew 'em; and times, when we 're sitting alone, I read him those things on the wall. Why, Lord!" said Miggles, with her frank laugh, "I 've read him that whole side of the house this winter. There never was such a man for reading as Jim."

"Why," asked the Judge, "do you not marry this man to whom you have devoted your youthful life?"

"Well, you see," said Miggles, "it would be playing it rather low down on Jim to take advantage of his being so helpless. And then, too, if we were man and wife, now, we 'd both know that I was *bound* to do what I do now of my own accord."

"But you are young yet and attractive" —

"It 's getting late," said Miggles, gravely, "and you 'd better all turn in. Good-night, boys;" and, throwing the blanket over her head, Miggles laid herself down beside Jim's chair, her head pillowed on the low stool that held his feet, and spoke no more. The fire slowly faded from the hearth; we each sought our blankets in silence; and presently there was no sound in the long room but the pattering of the rain upon the roof, and the heavy breathing of the sleepers.

It was nearly morning when I awoke from a troubled dream. The storm had passed, the stars were shining, and through the shutterless window the full moon, lifting itself over the solemn pines without, looked into the room. It touched the lonely figure in the chair with an infinite compassion, and seemed to baptize with a shining flood the lowly head of the woman whose hair, as in the sweet old story, bathed the feet of him she loved. It even lent a kindly poetry to the rugged outline of Yuba Bill, half reclining on his elbow between them and his passengers, with savagely patient eyes keeping watch and ward. And then I fell asleep,

and only woke at broad day, with Yuba Bill standing over me, and "All aboard" ringing in my ears.

Coffee was waiting for us on the table, but Miggles was gone. We wandered about the house and lingered long after the horses were harnessed, but she did not return. It was evident that she wished to avoid a formal leave-taking, and had so left us to depart as we had come. After we had helped the ladies into the coach, we returned to the house and solemnly shook hands with the paralytic Jim, as solemnly settling him back into position after each hand-shake. Then we looked for the last time around the long, low room, at the stool where Miggles had sat, and slowly took our seats in the waiting coach. The whip cracked, and we were off!

But as we reached the highroad, Bill's dexterous hand laid the six horses back on their haunches, and the stage stopped with a jerk. For there, on a little eminence beside the road, stood Miggles, her hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her white handkerchief waving, and her white teeth flashing a last "good-by." We waved our hats in return And then Yuba Bill, as if fearful of further fascination, madly lashed his horses for-

ward, and we sank back in our seats. We exchanged not a word until we reached the North Fork, and the stage drew up at the Independence House. Then, the Judge leading, we walked into the bar-room and took our places gravely at the bar.

"Are your glasses charged, gentlemen?" said the Judge, solemnly taking off his white hat.

They were.

"Well, then, here 's to *Miggles*, — GOD BLESS HER!"

Perhaps He had. Who knows?

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER.

I DO not think that we ever knew his real name. Our ignorance of it certainly never gave us any social inconvenience, for at Sandy Bar in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctiveness of dress, as in the case of "Dungaree Jack;" or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in "Saleratus Bill," so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in "The Iron Pirate," a mild, inoffensive man, who earned that baleful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term "iron pyrites." Perhaps this may have been the beginning of a rude heraldry; but I am constrained to think that it was because a man's real name in that day rested solely upon his own unsupported statement. "Call yourself Clifford, do you?" said Boston, addressing a timid new-comer with infinite

scorn; "hell is full of such Cliffords!" He then introduced the unfortunate man, whose name happened to be really Clifford, as "Jaybird Charley," — an unhallowed inspiration of the moment that clung to him ever after.

But to return to Tennessee's Partner, whom we never knew by any other than this relative title; that he had ever existed as a separate and distinct individuality we only learned later. It seems that in 1853 he left Poker Flat to go to San Francisco, ostensibly to procure a wife. He never got any farther than Stockton. At that place he was attracted by a young person who waited upon the table at the hotel where he took his meals. One morning he said something to her which caused her to smile not unkindly, to somewhat coquettishly break a plate of toast over his upturned, serious, simple face, and to retreat to the kitchen. He followed her, and emerged a few moments later, covered with more toast and victory. That day week they were married by a Justice of the Peace, and returned to Poker Flat. I am aware that something more might be made of this episode, but I prefer to tell it as it was current at Sandy

Bar, — in the gulches and bar-rooms, — where all sentiment was modified by a strong sense of humor.

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and chastely retreated, — this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to housekeeping without the aid of a Justice of the Peace. Tennessee's Partner took the loss of his wife simply and seriously, as was his fashion. But to everybody's surprise, when Tennessee one day returned from Marysville, without his partner's wife, — she having smiled and retreated with somebody else, — Tennessee's Partner was the first man to shake his hand and greet him with affection. The boys who had gathered in the cañon to see the shooting were naturally indignant. Their indignation might have found vent in sarcasm but for a certain look in Tennessee's Partner's eye that indicated a lack of humorous appreciation. In fact, he was a grave man, with a steady application to practical detail which was unpleasant in a difficulty.

Meanwhile a popular feeling against Tennessee had grown up on the Bar. He was known to be a gambler; he was suspected to be a thief. In these suspicions Tennessee's Partner was equally compromised; his continued intimacy with Tennessee after the affair above quoted could only be accounted for on the hypothesis of a copartnership of crime. At last Tennessee's guilt became flagrant. One day he overtook a stranger on his way to Red Dog. The stranger afterward related that Tennessee beguiled the time with interesting anecdote and reminiscence, but illogically concluded the interview in the following words: "And now, young man, I 'll trouble you for your knife, your pistols, and your money. You see your weppings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money 's a temptation to the evilly disposed. I think you said your address was San Francisco. I shall endeavor to call." It may be stated here that Tennessee had a fine flow of humor, which no business preoccupation could wholly subdue.

This exploit was his last. Red Dog and Sandy Bar made common cause against the highwayman. Tennessee was hunted in very

much the same fashion as his prototype, the grizzly. As the toils closed around him, he made a desperate dash through the Bar, emptying his revolver at the crowd before the Arcade Saloon, and so on up Grizzly Cañon; but at its farther extremity he was stopped by a small man on a gray horse. The men looked at each other a moment in silence. Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent, and both types of a civilization that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but in the nineteenth simply "reckless." "What have you got there? — I call," said Tennessee, quietly. "Two bowers and an ace," said the stranger, as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowie-knife. "That takes me," returned Tennessee; and, with this gambler's epigram, he threw away his useless pistol, and rode back with his captor.

It was a warm night. The cool breeze which usually sprang up with the going down of the sun behind the *chaparral*-crested mountain was that evening withheld from Sandy Bar. The little cañon was stifling with heated resinous odors, and the decaying driftwood on the Bar sent forth faint, sick-

ening exhalations. The feverishness of day and its fierce passions still filled the camp. Lights moved restlessly along the bank of the river, striking no answering reflection from its tawny current. Against the blackness of the pines the windows of the old loft above the express-office stood out staringly bright; and through their curtainless panes the loungers below could see the forms of those who were even then deciding the fate of Tennessee. And above all this, etched on the dark firmament, rose the Sierra, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter passionless stars.

The trial of Tennessee was conducted as fairly as was consistent with a judge and jury who felt themselves to some extent obliged to justify, in their verdict, the previous irregularities of arrest and indictment. The law of Sandy Bar was implacable, but not vengeful. The excitement and personal feeling of the chase were over; with Tennessee safe in their hands they were ready to listen patiently to any defence, which they were already satisfied was insufficient. There being no doubt in their own minds, they were willing to give the prisoner the benefit of any that might exist. Secure in the hypoth-

esis that he ought to be hanged, on general principles, they indulged him with more latitude of defence than his reckless hardihood seemed to ask. The Judge appeared to be more anxious than the prisoner, who, otherwise unconcerned, evidently took a grim pleasure in the responsibility he had created. "I don't take any hand in this yer game," had been his invariable but good-humored reply to all questions. The Judge — who was also his captor — for a moment vaguely regretted that he had not shot him "on sight," that morning, but presently dismissed this human weakness as unworthy of the judicial mind. Nevertheless, when there was a tap at the door, and it was said that Tennessee's Partner was there on behalf of the prisoner, he was admitted at once without question. Perhaps the younger members of the jury, to whom the proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful, hailed him as a relief.

For he was not, certainly, an imposing figure. Short and stout, with a square face, sunburned into a preternatural redness, clad in a loose duck "jumper" and trousers streaked and splashed with red soil, his aspect under any circumstances would have been

quaint, and was now even ridiculous. As he stooped to deposit at his feet a heavy carpet-bag he was carrying, it became obvious, from partially developed legends and inscriptions, that the material with which his trousers had been patched had been originally intended for a less ambitious covering. Yet he advanced with great gravity, and after shaking the hand of each person in the room with labored cordiality, he wiped his serious, perplexed face on a red bandanna handkerchief, a shade lighter than his complexion, laid his powerful hand upon the table to steady himself, and thus addressed the Judge: —

"I was passin' by," he began, by way of apology, "and I thought I 'd just step in and see how things was gittin' on with Tennessee thar, — my pardner. It 's a hot night. I disremember any sich weather before on the Bar."

He paused a moment, but nobody volunteering any other meteorological recollection, he again had recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, and for some moments mopped his face diligently.

"Have you anything to say on behalf of the prisoner?" said the Judge, finally.

"Thet 's it," said Tennessee's Partner, in a tone of relief. "I come yar as Tennessee's pardner, — knowing him nigh on four year, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o' luck. His ways ain't allers my ways, but thar ain't any p'ints in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he 's been up to, as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you, — confidential-like, and between man and man, — sez you, 'Do you know anything in his behalf?' and I sez to you, sez I, — confidential-like, as between man and man, — 'What should a man know of his pardner?'"

"Is this all you have to say?" asked the Judge impatiently, feeling, perhaps, that a dangerous sympathy of humor was beginning to humanize the court.

"Thet 's so," continued Tennessee's Partner. "It ain't for me to say anything agin' him. And now, what 's the case? Here 's Tennessee wants money, wants it bad, and does n't like to ask it of his old pardner. Well, what does Tennessee do? He lays for a stranger, and he fetches that stranger; and you lays for *him*, and you fetches *him;* and the honors is easy. And I put it to you, bein' a far-minded man, and to you, gentlemen all, as far-minded men, ef this is n't so."

"Prisoner," said the Judge, interrupting, "have you any questions to ask this man?"

"No! no!" continued Tennessee's Partner hastily. "I play this yer hand alone. To come down to the bed-rock, it 's just this: Tennessee, thar, has played it pretty rough and expensive-like on a stranger, and on this yer camp. And now, what 's the fair thing? Some would say more; some would say less. Here 's seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold and a watch, — it 's about all my pile, — and call it square!" And before a hand could be raised to prevent him, he had emptied the contents of the carpet-bag upon the table.

For a moment his life was in jeopardy. One or two men sprang to their feet, several hands groped for hidden weapons, and a suggestion to "throw him from the window" was only overridden by a gesture from the Judge. Tennessee laughed. And apparently oblivious of the excitement, Tennessee's Partner improved the opportunity to mop his face again with his handkerchief.

When order was restored, and the man was made to understand, by the use of forcible figures and rhetoric, that Tennessee's offence could not be condoned by money, his

face took a more serious and sanguinary hue, and those who were nearest to him noticed that his rough hand trembled slightly on the table. He hesitated a moment as he slowly returned the gold to the carpet-bag, as if he had not yet entirely caught the elevated sense of justice which swayed the tribunal, and was perplexed with the belief that he had not offered enough. Then he turned to the Judge, and saying, "This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner," he bowed to the jury and was about to withdraw, when the Judge called him back. "If you have anything to say to Tennessee, you had better say it now." For the first time that evening the eyes of the prisoner and his strange advocate met. Tennessee smiled, showed his white teeth, and saying, "Euchred, old man!" held out his hand. Tennessee's Partner took it in his own, and saying, "I just dropped in as I was passin' to see how things was gettin' on," let the hand passively fall, and adding that "it was a warm night," again mopped his face with his handkerchief, and without another word withdrew.

The two men never again met each other alive. For the unparalleled insult of a bribe

offered to Judge Lynch — who, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible — firmly fixed in the mind of that mythical personage any wavering determination of Tennessee's fate; and at the break of day he was marched, closely guarded, to meet it at the top of Marley's Hill.

How he met it, how cool he was, how he refused to say anything, how perfect were the arrangements of the committee, were all duly reported, with the addition of a warning moral and example to all future evildoers, in the Red Dog Clarion, by its editor, who was present, and to whose vigorous English I cheerfully refer the reader. But the beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and, above all, the infinite serenity that thrilled through each, was not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. And yet, when the weak and foolish deed was done, and a life, with its possibilities and responsibilities, had passed out of the misshapen thing that dangled between earth and sky, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the sun shone, as cheerily as before; and possibly the Red Dog Clarion was right.

Tennessee's Partner was not in the group that surrounded the ominous tree. But as they turned to disperse, attention was drawn to the singular appearance of a motionless donkey-cart halted at the side of the road. As they approached, they at once recognized the venerable Jenny and the two-wheeled cart as the property of Tennessee's Partner, — used by him in carrying dirt from his claim; and a few paces distant the owner of the equipage himself, sitting under a buckeye tree, wiping the perspiration from his glowing face. In answer to an inquiry, he said he had come for the body of the "diseased," "if it was all the same to the committee." He did n't wish to "hurry anything;" he could wait. He was not working that day; and when the gentlemen were done with the "diseased" he would take him. "Ef thar is any present," he added, in his simple, serious way, "as would care to jine in the fun'l, they kin come." Perhaps it was from a sense of humor, which I have already intimated was a feature of Sandy Bar, — perhaps it was from something even better than that; but two thirds of the loungers accepted the invitation at once.

It was noon when the body of Tennessee

was delivered into the hands of his partner. As the cart drew up to the fatal tree, we noticed that it contained a rough oblong box, — apparently made from a section of sluicing, — and half filled with bark and the tassels of pine. The cart was further decorated with slips of willow, and made fragrant with buckeye-blossoms. When the body was deposited in the box, Tennessee's Partner drew over it a piece of tarred canvas, and gravely mounting the narrow seat in front, with his feet upon the shafts, urged the little donkey forward. The equipage moved slowly on, at that decorous pace which was habitual with Jenny even under less solemn circumstances. The men — half curiously, half jestingly, but all good-humoredly — strolled along beside the cart; some in advance, some a little in the rear, of the homely catafalque. But, whether from the narrowing of the road or some present sense of decorum, as the cart passed on, the company fell to the rear in couples, keeping step, and otherwise assuming the external show of a formal procession. Jack Folinsbee, who had at the outset played a funeral march in dumb show upon an imaginary trombone, desisted, from a lack of sympathy and appre-

ciation, — not having, perhaps, your true humorist's capacity to be content with the enjoyment of his own fun.

The way led through Grizzly Cañon, by this time clothed in funereal drapery and shadows. The redwoods, burying their moccasined feet in the red soil, stood in Indian-file along the track, trailing an uncouth benediction from their bending boughs upon the passing bier. A hare, surprised into helpless inactivity, sat upright and pulsating in the ferns by the roadside, as the *cortége* went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs; and the blue-jays, spreading their wings, fluttered before them like outriders, until the outskirts of Sandy Bar were reached, and the solitary cabin of Tennessee's Partner.

Viewed under more favorable circumstances, it would not have been a cheerful place. The unpicturesque site, the rude and unlovely outlines, the unsavory details, which distinguish the nest-building of the California miner, were all here, with the dreariness of decay superadded. A few paces from the cabin there was a rough enclosure, which, in the brief days of Tennessee's Partner's matrimonial felicity, had been used as a garden,

but was now overgrown with fern. As we approached it we were surprised to find that what we had taken for a recent attempt at cultivation was the broken soil about an open grave.

The cart was halted before the enclosure; and rejecting the offers of assistance with the same air of simple self-reliance he had displayed throughout, Tennessee's Partner lifted the rough coffin on his back, and deposited it unaided, within the shallow grave. He then nailed down the board which served as a lid, and mounting the little mound of earth beside it, took off his hat, and slowly mopped his face with his handkerchief. This the crowd felt was a preliminary to speech; and they disposed themselves variously on stumps and boulders, and sat expectant.

"When a man," began Tennessee's Partner slowly, "has been running free all day, what 's the natural thing for him to do? Why, to come home. And if he ain't in a condition to go home, what can his best friend do? Why, bring him home! And here 's Tennessee has been running free, and we brings him home from his wandering." He paused, and picked up a fragment of

quartz, rubbed it thoughtfully on his sleeve, and went on: "It ain't the first time that I've packed him on my back, as you see'd me now. It ain't the first time that I brought him to this yer cabin when he could n't help himself; it ain't the first time that I and Jinny have waited for him on yon hill, and picked him up and so fetched him home, when he could n't speak, and did n't know me. And now that it 's the last time, why" — he paused, and rubbed the quartz gently on his sleeve — "you see it 's sort of rough on his pardner. And now, gentlemen," he added abruptly, picking up his long-handled shovel, "the fun'l 's over; and my thanks, and Tennessee's thanks, to you for your trouble."

Resisting any proffers of assistance, he began to fill in the grave, turning his back upon the crowd, that after a few moments' hesitation gradually withdrew. As they crossed the little ridge that hid Sandy Bar from view, some, looking back, thought they could see Tennessee's Partner, his work done, sitting upon the grave, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in his red bandanna handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you could n't tell his

face from his handkerchief at that distance; and this point remained undecided.

In the reaction that followed the feverish excitement of that day, Tennessee's Partner was not forgotten. A secret investigation had cleared him of any complicity in Tennessee's guilt, and left only a suspicion of his general sanity. Sandy Bar made a point of calling on him, and proffering various uncouth but well-meant kindnesses. But from that day his rude health and great strength seemed visibly to decline; and when the rainy season fairly set in, and the tiny grass-blades were beginning to peep from the rocky mound above Tennessee's grave, he took to his bed.

One night, when the pines beside the cabin were swaying in the storm, and trailing their slender fingers over the roof, and the roar and rush of the swollen river were heard below, Tennessee's Partner lifted his head from the pillow, saying, "It is time to go for Tennessee; I must put Jinny in the cart;" and would have risen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy: "There, now, steady, Jinny, — steady,

old girl. How dark it is! Look out for the ruts, — and look out for him, too, old gal. Sometimes, you know, when he 's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar! I told you so! — thar he is, — coming this way, too, — all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee! Pardner!"

And so they met.

THE IDYL OF RED GULCH.

SANDY was very drunk. He was lying under an azalea bush, in pretty much the same attitude in which he had fallen some hours before. How long he had been lying there he could not tell, and did n't care; how long he should lie there was a matter equally indefinite and unconsidered. A tranquil philosophy, born of his physical condition, suffused and saturated his moral being.

The spectacle of a drunken man, and of this drunken man in particular, was not, I grieve to say, of sufficient novelty in Red Gulch to attract attention. Earlier in the day some local satirist had erected a temporary tombstone at Sandy's head, bearing the inscription, "Effects of McCorkle's whiskey, — kills at forty rods," with a hand pointing to McCorkle's saloon. But this, I imagine, was, like most local satire, personal; and was a reflection upon the unfairness of the process rather than a commentary upon the

impropriety of the result. With this facetious exception, Sandy had been undisturbed. A wandering mule, released from his pack, had cropped the scant herbage beside him, and sniffed curiously at the prostrate man; a vagabond dog, with that deep sympathy which the species have for drunken men, had licked his dusty boots, and curled himself up at his feet, and lay there, blinking one eye in the sunlight, with a simulation of dissipation that was ingenious and dog-like in its implied flattery of the unconscious man beside him.

Meanwhile the shadows of the pine-trees had slowly swung around until they crossed the road, and their trunks barred the open meadow with gigantic parallels of black and yellow. Little puffs of red dust, lifted by the plunging hoofs of passing teams, dispersed in a grimy shower upon the recumbent man. The sun sank lower and lower, and still Sandy stirred not. And then the repose of this philosopher was disturbed, as other philosophers have been, by the intrusion of an unphilosophical sex.

"Miss Mary," as she was known to the little flock that she had just dismissed from the log schoolhouse beyond the pines, was

taking her afternoon walk. Observing an unusually fine cluster of blossoms on the azalea bush opposite, she crossed the road to pluck it, picking her way through the red dust, not without certain fierce little shivers of disgust and some feline circumlocution. And then she came suddenly upon Sandy!

Of course she uttered the little *staccato* cry of her sex. But when she had paid that tribute to her physical weakness she became overbold, and halted for a moment, — at least six feet from this prostrate monster, — with her white skirts gathered in her hand, ready for flight. But neither sound nor motion came from the bush. With one little foot she then overturned the satirical headboard, and muttered "Beasts!" — an epithet which probably, at that moment, conveniently classified in her mind the entire male population of Red Gulch. For Miss Mary, being possessed of certain rigid notions of her own, had not, perhaps, properly appreciated the demonstrative gallantry for which the Californian has been so justly celebrated by his brother Californians, and had, as a new-comer, perhaps fairly earned the reputation of being "stuck up."

As she stood there she noticed, also, that

the slant sunbeams were heating Sandy's head to what she judged to be an unhealthy temperature, and that his hat was lying uselessly at his side. To pick it up and to place it over his face was a work requiring some courage, particularly as his eyes were open. Yet she did it and made good her retreat. But she was somewhat concerned, on looking back, to see that the hat was removed, and that Sandy was sitting up and saying something.

The truth was, that in the calm depths of Sandy's mind he was satisfied that the rays of the sun were beneficial and healthful; that from childhood he had objected to lying down in a hat; that no people but condemned fools, past redemption, ever wore hats; and that his right to dispense with them when he pleased was inalienable. This was the statement of his inner consciousness. Unfortunately, its outward expression was vague, being limited to a repetition of the following formula: "Su'shine all ri'! Wasser maär, eh? Wass up, su'shine?"

Miss Mary stopped, and, taking fresh courage from her vantage of distance, asked him if there was anything that he wanted.

"Wass up? Wasser maär?" continued Sandy, in a very high key.

"Get up, you horrid man!" said Miss Mary, now thoroughly incensed; "get up, and go home."

Sandy staggered to his feet. He was six feet high, and Miss Mary trembled. He started forward a few paces, and then stopped.

"Wass I go home for?" he suddenly asked, with great gravity.

"Go and take a bath," replied Miss Mary, eying his grimy person with great disfavor.

To her infinite dismay, Sandy suddenly pulled off his coat and vest, threw them on the ground, kicked off his boots, and, plunging wildly forward, darted headlong over the hill, in the direction of the river.

"Goodness Heavens! — the man will be drowned!" said Miss Mary; and then, with feminine inconsistency, she ran back to the schoolhouse, and locked herself in.

That night, while seated at supper with her hostess, the blacksmith's wife, it came to Miss Mary to ask, demurely, if her husband ever got drunk. "Abner," responded Mrs. Stidger, reflectively, "let's see! Abner has n't been tight since last 'lection." Miss Mary would have liked to ask if he pre-

ferred lying in the sun on these occasions, and if a cold bath would have hurt him; but this would have involved an explanation, which she did not then care to give. So she contented herself with opening her gray eyes widely at the red-cheeked Mrs. Stidger, — a fine specimen of Southwestern efflorescence, — and then dismissed the subject altogether. The next day she wrote to her dearest friend, in Boston: "I think I find the intoxicated portion of this community the least objectionable. I refer, my dear, to the men, of course. I do not know anything that could make the women tolerable."

In less than a week Miss Mary had forgotten this episode, except that her afternoon walks took thereafter, almost unconsciously, another direction. She noticed, however, that every morning a fresh cluster of azalea blossoms appeared among the flowers on her desk. This was not strange, as her little flock were aware of her fondness for flowers, and invariably kept her desk bright with anemones, syringas, and lupines; but on questioning them they one and all professed ignorance of the azaleas. A few days later, Master Johnny Stidger,

whose desk was nearest to the window, was suddenly taken with spasms of apparently gratuitous laughter, that threatened the discipline of the school. All that Miss Mary could get from him was that some one had been "looking in the winder." Irate and indignant, she sallied from her hive to do battle with the intruder. As she turned the corner of the schoolhouse she came plump upon the quondam drunkard, now perfectly sober, and inexpressibly sheepish and guilty-looking.

These facts Miss Mary was not slow to take a feminine advantage of, in her present humor. But it was somewhat confusing to observe, also, that the beast, despite some faint signs of past dissipation, was amiable-looking, — in fact, a kind of blonde Samson, whose corn-colored silken beard apparently had never yet known the touch of barber's razor or Delilah's shears. So that the cutting speech which quivered on her ready tongue died upon her lips, and she contented herself with receiving his stammering apology with supercilious eyelids and the gathered skirts of uncontamination. When she reëntered the schoolroom, her eyes fell upon the azaleas with a new sense of revelation.

And then she laughed, and the little people all laughed, and they were all unconsciously very happy.

It was on a hot day — and not long after this — that two short-legged boys came to grief on the threshold of the school with a pail of water, which they had laboriously brought from the spring, and that Miss Mary compassionately seized the pail and started for the spring herself. At the foot of the hill a shadow crossed her path, and a blue-shirted arm dexterously but gently relieved her of her burden. Miss Mary was both embarrassed and angry. "If you carried more of that for yourself," she said spitefully, to the blue arm, without deigning to raise her lashes to its owner, "you 'd do better." In the submissive silence that followed she regretted the speech, and thanked him so sweetly at the door that he stumbled. Which caused the children to laugh again, — a laugh in which Miss Mary joined, until the color came faintly into her pale cheek. The next day a barrel was mysteriously placed beside the door, and as mysteriously filled with fresh spring-water every morning.

Nor was this superior young person without other quiet attentions. "Profane Bill,"

driver of the Slumgullion Stage, widely known in the newspapers for his "gallantry" in invariably offering the box-seat to the fair sex, had excepted Miss Mary from this attention, on the ground that he had a habit of "cussin' on up grades," and gave her half the coach to herself. Jack Hamlin, a gambler, having once silently ridden with her in the same coach, afterward threw a decanter at the head of a confederate for mentioning her name in a bar-room. The over-dressed mother of a pupil whose paternity was doubtful had often lingered near this astute Vestal's temple, never daring to enter its sacred precincts, but content to worship the priestess from afar.

With such unconscious intervals the monotonous procession of blue skies, glittering sunshine, brief twilights, and starlit nights passed over Red Gulch. Miss Mary grew fond of walking in the sedate and proper woods. Perhaps she believed, with Mrs. Stidger, that the balsamic odors of the firs "did her chest good," for certainly her slight cough was less frequent and her step was firmer; perhaps she had learned the unending lesson which the patient pines are never weary of repeating to heedful or list-

less ears. And so, one day, she planned a picnic on Buckeye Hill, and took the children with her. Away from the dusty road, the straggling shanties, the yellow ditches, the clamor of restless engines, the cheap finery of shop-windows, the deeper glitter of paint and colored glass, and the thin veneering which barbarism takes upon itself in such localities, — what infinite relief was theirs! The last heap of ragged rock and clay passed, the last unsightly chasm crossed, — how the waiting woods opened their long files to receive them! How the children — perhaps because they had not yet grown quite away from the breast of the bounteous Mother — threw themselves face downward on her brown bosom with uncouth caresses, filling the air with their laughter; and how Miss Mary herself — felinely fastidious and intrenched as she was in the purity of spotless skirts, collar, and cuffs — forgot all, and ran like a crested quail at the head of her brood, until romping, laughing, and panting, with a loosened braid of brown hair, a hat hanging by a knotted ribbon from her throat, she came suddenly and violently, in the heart of the forest, upon the luckless Sandy!

The explanations, apologies, and not overwise conversation that ensued need not be indicated here. It would seem, however, that Miss Mary had already established some acquaintance with this ex-drunkard. Enough that he was soon accepted as one of the party; that the children, with that quick intelligence which Providence gives the helpless, recognized a friend, and played with his blonde beard and long silken mustache, and took other liberties, — as the helpless are apt to do. And when he had built a fire against a tree, and had shown them other mysteries of woodcraft, their admiration knew no bounds. At the close of two such foolish, idle, happy hours he found himself lying at the feet of the schoolmistress, gazing dreamily in her face, as she sat upon the sloping hillside, weaving wreaths of laurel and syringa, in very much the same attitude as he had lain when first they met. Nor was the similitude greatly forced. The weakness of an easy, sensuous nature, that had found a dreamy exaltation in liquor, it is to be feared was now finding an equal intoxication in love.

I think that Sandy was dimly conscious of this himself. I know that he longed to

be doing something, — slaying a grizzly, scalping a savage, or sacrificing himself in some way for the sake of this sallow-faced, gray-eyed schoolmistress. As I should like to present him in a heroic attitude, I stay my hand with great difficulty at this moment, being only withheld from introducing such an episode by a strong conviction that it does not usually occur at such times. And I trust that my fairest reader, who remembers that, in a real crisis, it is always some uninteresting stranger or unromantic policeman, and not Adolphus, who rescues, will forgive the omission.

So they sat there, undisturbed, the woodpeckers chattering overhead, and the voices of the children coming pleasantly from the hollow below. What they said matters little. What they thought — which might have been interesting — did not transpire. The woodpeckers only learned how Miss Mary was an orphan; how she left her uncle's house, to come to California, for the sake of health and independence; how Sandy was an orphan, too; how he came to California for excitement; how he had lived a wild life, and how he was trying to reform; and other details, which, from a

woodpecker's view-point, undoubtedly must have seemed stupid and a waste of time. But even in such trifles was the afternoon spent; and when the children were again gathered, and Sandy, with a delicacy which the schoolmistress well understood, took leave of them quietly at the outskirts of the settlement, it had seemed the shortest day of her weary life.

As the long, dry summer withered to its roots, the school term of Red Gulch — to use a local euphuism — "dried up" also. In another day Miss Mary would be free; and for a season, at least, Red Gulch would know her no more. She was seated alone in the schoolhouse, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes half closed in one of those day-dreams in which Miss Mary, I fear, to the danger of school discipline, was lately in the habit of indulging. Her lap was full of mosses, ferns, and other woodland memories. She was so preoccupied with these and her own thoughts that a gentle tapping at the door passed unheard, or translated itself into the remembrance of far-off woodpeckers. When at last it asserted itself more distinctly, she started up with a flushed cheek and opened the

door. On the threshold stood a woman, the self-assertion and audacity of whose dress were in singular contrast to her timid, irresolute bearing.

Miss Mary recognized at a glance the dubious mother of her anonymous pupil. Perhaps she was disappointed, perhaps she was only fastidious; but as she coldly invited her to enter, she half unconsciously settled her white cuffs and collar, and gathered closer her own chaste skirts. It was, perhaps, for this reason that the embarrassed stranger, after a moment's hesitation, left her gorgeous parasol open and sticking in the dust beside the door, and then sat down at the farther end of a long bench. Her voice was husky as she began: —

"I heerd tell that you were goin' down to the Bay to-morrow, and I could n't let you go until I came to thank you for your kindness to my Tommy."

Tommy, Miss Mary said, was a good boy, and deserved more than the poor attention she could give him.

"Thank you, miss; thank ye!" cried the stranger, brightening even through the color which Red Gulch knew facetiously as her

"war paint," and striving, in her embarrassment, to drag the long bench nearer the schoolmistress. "I thank you, miss, for that; and if I am his mother, there ain't a sweeter, dearer, better boy lives than him. And if I ain't much as says it, thar ain't a sweeter, dearer, angeler teacher lives than he 's got."

Miss Mary, sitting primly behind her desk, with a ruler over her shoulder, opened her gray eyes widely at this, but said nothing.

"It ain't for you to be complimented by the like of me, I know," she went on, hurriedly. "It ain't for me to be comin' here, in broad day, to do it, either; but I come to ask a favor, — not for me, miss, — not for me, but for the darling boy."

Encouraged by a look in the young schoolmistress's eye, and putting her lilac-gloved hands together, the fingers downward, between her knees, she went on, in a low voice: —

"You see, miss, there 's no one the boy has any claim on but me, and I ain't the proper person to bring him up. I thought some, last year, of sending him away to 'Frisco to school, but when they talked of bringing a schoolma'am here I waited till I

saw you, and then I knew it was all right, and I could keep my boy a little longer. And oh, miss, he loves you so much; and if you could hear him talk about you, in his pretty way, and if he could ask you what I ask you now, you could n't refuse him.

"It is natural," she went on rapidly, in a voice that trembled strangely between pride and humility, — "it 's natural that he should take to you, miss, for his father, when I first knew him, was a gentleman, — and the boy must forget me, sooner or later, — and so I ain't a goin' to cry about that. For I come to ask you to take my Tommy, — God bless him for the bestest, sweetest boy that lives, — to — to — take him with you."

She had risen and caught the young girl's hand in her own, and had fallen on her knees beside her.

"I 've money plenty, and it 's all yours and his. Put him in some good school, where you can go and see him, and help him to — to — to forget his mother. Do with him what you like. The worst you can do will be kindness to what he will learn with me. Only take him out of this wicked life, this cruel place, this home of shame and sorrow. You will! I know you will, —

won't you? You will, — you must not, you cannot say no! You will make him as pure, as gentle, as yourself; and when he has grown up, you will tell him his father's name, — the name that has n't passed my lips for years, — the name of Alexander Morton, whom they call here Sandy! Miss Mary! — do not take your hand away! Miss Mary, speak to me! You will take my boy? Do not put your face from me. I know it ought not to look on such as me. Miss Mary! — my God, be merciful! — she is leaving me!"

Miss Mary had risen, and, in the gathering twilight, had felt her way to the open window. She stood there, leaning against the casement, her eyes fixed on the last rosy tints that were fading from the western sky. There was still some of its light on her pure young forehead, on her white collar, on her clasped white hands, but all fading slowly away. The suppliant had dragged herself, still on her knees, beside her.

"I know it takes time to consider. I will wait here all night; but I cannot go until you speak. Do not deny me now. You will! — I see it in your sweet face, — such a face as I have seen in my dreams.

I see it in your eyes, Miss Mary! — you will take my boy!"

The last red beam crept higher, suffused Miss Mary's eyes with something of its glory, flickered, and faded, and went out. The sun had set on Red Gulch. In the twilight and silence Miss Mary's voice sounded pleasantly.

"I will take the boy. Send him to me to-night."

The happy mother raised the hem of Miss Mary's skirts to her lips. She would have buried her hot face in its virgin folds, but she dared not. She rose to her feet.

"Does — this man — know of your intention?" asked Miss Mary suddenly.

"No, nor cares. He has never even seen the child to know it."

"Go to him at once, — to-night, — now! Tell him what you have done. Tell him I have taken his child, and tell him — he must never see — see — the child again. Wherever it may be, he must not come; wherever I may take it, he must not follow! There, go now, please, — I 'm weary, and — have much yet to do!"

They walked together to the door. On the threshold the woman turned.

"Good-night!"

She would have fallen at Miss Mary's feet. But at the same moment the young girl reached out her arms, caught the sinful woman to her own pure breast for one brief moment, and then closed and locked the door.

It was with a sudden sense of great responsibility that Profane Bill took the reins of the Slumgullion Stage the next morning, for the schoolmistress was one of his passengers. As he entered the highroad, in obedience to a pleasant voice from the "inside," he suddenly reined up his horses and respectfully waited, as "Tommy" hopped out at the command of Miss Mary.

"Not that bush, Tommy, — the next."

Tommy whipped out his new pocket-knife, and, cutting a branch from a tall azalea bush, returned with it to Miss Mary.

"All right now?"

"All right!"

And the stage-door closed on the Idyl of Red Gulch.

HOW SANTA CLAUS CAME TO SIMPSON'S BAR.

It had been raining in the valley of the Sacramento. The North Fork had overflowed its banks, and Rattlesnake Creek was impassable. The few boulders that had marked the summer ford at Simpson's Crossing were obliterated by a vast sheet of water stretching to the foot-hills. The upstage was stopped at Granger's; the last mail had been abandoned in the *tules*, the rider swimming for his life. "An area," remarked the Sierra Avalanche, with pensive local pride, "as large as the State of Massachusetts is now under water."

Nor was the weather any better in the foot-hills. The mud lay deep on the mountain road; wagons that neither physical force nor moral objurgation could move from the evil ways into which they had fallen encumbered the track, and the way to Simpson's Bar was indicated by broken-down teams

and hard swearing. And farther on, cut off and inaccessible, rained upon and bedraggled, smitten by high winds and threatened by high water, Simpson's Bar, on the eve of Christmas Day, 1862, clung like a swallow's nest to the rocky entablature and splintered capitals of Table Mountain, and shook in the blast.

As night shut down on the settlement, a few lights gleamed through the mist from the windows of cabins on either side of the highway, now crossed and gullied by lawless streams and swept by marauding winds. Happily most of the population were gathered at Thompson's store, clustered around a red-hot stove, at which they silently spat in some accepted sense of social communion that perhaps rendered conversation unnecessary. Indeed, most methods of diversion had long since been exhausted on Simpson's Bar; high water had suspended the regular occupations on gulch and on river, and a consequent lack of money and whiskey had taken the zest from most illegitimate recreation. Even Mr. Hamlin was fain to leave the Bar with fifty dollars in his pocket, — the only amount actually realized of the large sums won by him in the successful

exercise of his arduous profession. "Ef I was asked," he remarked somewhat later, — "ef I was asked to pint out a purty little village where a retired sport as did n't care for money could exercise hisself, frequent and lively, I 'd say Simpson's Bar; but for a young man with a large family depending on his exertions, it don't pay." As Mr. Hamlin's family consisted mainly of female adults, this remark is quoted rather to show the breadth of his humor than the exact extent of his responsibilities.

Howbeit, the unconscious objects of this satire sat that evening in the listless apathy begotten of idleness and lack of excitement. Even the sudden splashing of hoofs before the door did not arouse them. Dick Bullen alone paused in the act of scraping out his pipe, and lifted his head, but no other one of the group indicated any interest in, or recognition of, the man who entered.

It was a figure familiar enough to the company, and known in Simpson's Bar as "The Old Man." A man of perhaps fifty years; grizzled and scant of hair, but still fresh and youthful of complexion. A face full of ready but not very powerful sympathy, with a chameleon-like aptitude for

taking on the shade and color of contiguous moods and feelings. He had evidently just left some hilarious companions, and did not at first notice the gravity of the group, but clapped the shoulder of the nearest man jocularly, and threw himself into a vacant chair.

"Jest heard the best thing out, boys! Ye know Smiley, over yar — Jim Smiley — funniest man in the Bar? Well, Jim was jest telling the richest yarn about" —

"Smiley 's a —— fool!" interrupted a gloomy voice.

"A particular —— skunk!" added another in sepulchral accents.

A silence followed these positive statements. The Old Man glanced quickly around the group. Then his face slowly changed. "That 's so," he said reflectively, after a pause, "certingly a sort of a skunk and suthin' of a fool. In course." He was silent for a moment as in painful contemplation of the unsavoriness and folly of the unpopular Smiley. "Dismal weather, ain't it?" he added, now fully embarked on the current of prevailing sentiment. "Mighty rough papers on the boys, and no show for money this season. And to-morrow 's Christmas."

There was a movement among the men at this announcement, but whether of satisfaction or disgust was not plain. "Yes," continued the Old Man in the lugubrious tone he had, within the last few moments, unconsciously adopted, — "yes, Christmas, and to-night 's Christmas Eve. Ye see, boys, I kinder thought — that is, I sorter had an idee, jest passin' like, you know — that maybe ye 'd all like to come over to my house to-night and have a sort of tear round. But I suppose, now, you would n't? Don't feel like it, maybe?" he added with anxious sympathy, peering into the faces of his companions.

"Well, I don't know," responded Tom Flynn with some cheerfulness. "P'r'aps we may. But how about your wife, Old Man? What does *she* say to it?"

The Old Man hesitated. His conjugal experience had not been a happy one, and the fact was known to Simpson's Bar. His first wife, a delicate, pretty little woman, had suffered keenly and secretly from the jealous suspicions of her husband, until one day he invited the whole Bar to his house to expose her infidelity. On arriving, the party found the shy, *petite* creature quietly

engaged in her household duties, and retired abashed and discomfited. But the sensitive woman did not easily recover from the shock of this extraordinary outrage. It was with difficulty she regained her equanimity sufficiently to release her lover from the closet in which he was concealed, and escape with him. She left a boy of three years to comfort her bereaved husband. The Old Man's present wife had been his cook. She was large, loyal, and aggressive.

Before he could reply, Joe Dimmick suggested with great directness that it was the "Old Man's house," and that, invoking the Divine Power, if the case were his own, he would invite whom he pleased, even if in so doing he imperilled his salvation. The Powers of Evil, he further remarked, should contend against him vainly. All this delivered with a terseness and vigor lost in this necessary translation.

"In course. Certainly. Thet 's it," said the Old Man, with a sympathetic frown. "Thar 's no trouble about *thet*. It 's my own house, built every stick on it myself. Don't you be afeard o' her, boys. She *may* put up a trifle rough — ez wimmin do — but she 'll come round." Secretly the Old Man

trusted to the exaltation of liquor and the power of courageous example to sustain him in such an emergency.

As yet, Dick Bullen, the oracle and leader of Simpson's Bar, had not spoken. He now took his pipe from his lips. "Old Man, how's that yer Johnny gettin' on? Seems to me he did n't look so peart last time I seed him on the bluff heavin' rocks at Chinamen. Did n't seem to take much interest in it. Thar was a gang of 'em by yar yesterday, — drownded out up the river, — and I kinder thought o' Johnny, and how he 'd miss 'em! Maybe now, we 'd be in the way ef he wus sick?"

The father, evidently touched not only by this pathetic picture of Johnny's deprivation, but by the considerate delicacy of the speaker, hastened to assure him that Johnny was better and that a "little fun might 'liven him up." Whereupon Dick arose, shook himself, and saying, "I 'm ready. Lead the way, Old Man: here goes," himself led the way with a leap, a characteristic howl, and darted out into the night. As he passed through the outer room he caught up a blazing brand from the hearth. The action was repeated by the rest of the party, closely fol-

lowing and elbowing each other, and before the astonished proprietor of Thompson's grocery was aware of the intention of his guests the room was deserted.

The night was pitchy dark. In the first gust of wind their temporary torches were extinguished, and only the red brands dancing and flitting in the gloom like drunken will-o'-the-wisps indicated their whereabouts. Their way led up Pine-Tree Cañon, at the head of which a broad, low, bark-thatched cabin burrowed in the mountain-side. It was the home of the Old Man, and the entrance to the tunnel in which he worked when he worked at all. Here the crowd paused for a moment, out of delicate deference to their host, who came up panting in the rear.

"P'r'aps ye 'd better hold on a second out yer, whilst I go in and see that things is all right," said the Old Man, with an indifference he was far from feeling. The suggestion was graciously accepted, the door opened and closed on the host, and the crowd, leaning their backs against the wall and cowering under the eaves, waited and listened.

For a few moments there was no sound but the dripping of water from the eaves, and the stir and rustle of wrestling boughs

above them. Then the men became uneasy, and whispered suggestion and suspicion passed from the one to the other. "Reckon she 's caved in his head the first lick!" "Decoyed him inter the tunnel and barred him up, likely." "Got him down and sittin' on him." "Prob'ly biling suthin' to heave on us: stand clear the door, boys!" For just then the latch clicked, the door slowly opened, and a voice said, "Come in out o' the wet."

The voice was neither that of the Old Man nor of his wife. It was the voice of a small boy, its weak treble broken by that preternatural hoarseness which only vagabondage and the habit of premature self-assertion can give. It was the face of a small boy that looked up at theirs, — a face that might have been pretty, and even refined, but that it was darkened by evil knowledge from within, and dirt and hard experience from without. He had a blanket around his shoulders, and had evidently just risen from his bed. "Come in," he repeated, "and don't make no noise. The Old Man 's in there talking to mar," he continued, pointing to an adjacent room which seemed to be a kitchen, from which the Old

Man's voice came in deprecating accents. "Let me be," he added querulously to Dick Bullen, who had caught him up, blanket and all, and was affecting to toss him into the fire; "let go o' me, you d—d old fool, d' ye hear?"

Thus adjured, Dick Bullen lowered Johnny to the ground with a smothered laugh, while the men, entering quietly, ranged themselves around a long table of rough boards which occupied the centre of the room. Johnny then gravely proceeded to a cupboard and brought out several articles, which he deposited on the table. "Thar 's whiskey. And crackers. And red herons. And cheese." He took a bite of the latter on his way to the table. "And sugar." He scooped up a mouthful *en route* with a small and very dirty hand. "And terbacker. Thar 's dried appils too on the shelf, but I don't admire 'em. Appils is swellin'. Thar," he concluded, "now wade in, and don't be afeard. *I* don't mind the old woman. She don't b'long to *me*. S' long."

He had stepped to the threshold of a small room, scarcely larger than a closet, partitioned off from the main apartment, and holding in its dim recess a small bed. He

stood there a moment looking at the company, his bare feet peeping from the blanket, and nodded.

"Hello, Johnny! You ain't goin' to turr in agin, are ye?" said Dick.

"Yes, I are," responded Johnny decidedly.

"Why, wot's up, old fellow?"

"I'm sick."

"How sick?"

"I've got a fevier. And childblains. And roomatiz," returned Johnny, and vanished within. After a moment's pause, he added in the dark, apparently from under the bed-clothes, "And biles!"

There was an embarrassing silence. The men looked at each other and at the fire. Even with the appetizing banquet before them, it seemed as if they might again fall into the despondency of Thompson's grocery, when the voice of the Old Man, incautiously lifted, came deprecatingly from the kitchen.

"Certainly! Thet 's so. In course they is. A gang o' lazy, drunken loafers, and that ar Dick Bullen 's the ornariest of all. Did n't hev no more *sabe* than to come round yar, with sickness in the house and no provision. Thet 's what I said: 'Bullen,' sez

I, 'it 's crazy drunk you are, or a fool,' sez I, 'to think o' such a thing.' 'Staples,' I sez, 'be you a man, Staples, and 'spect to raise h—ll under my roof, and invalids lyin' round?' But they would come, — they would. Thet 's wot you must 'spect o' such trash as lays round the Bar."

A burst of laughter from the men followed this unfortunate exposure. Whether it was overheard in the kitchen, or whether the Old Man's irate companion had just then exhausted all other modes of expressing her contemptuous indignation, I cannot say, but a back door was suddenly slammed with great violence. A moment later and the Old Man reappeared, haply unconscious of the cause of the late hilarious outburst, and smiled blandly.

"The old woman thought she 'd jest run over to Mrs. MacFadden's for a sociable call," he explained with jaunty indifference as he took a seat at the board.

Oddly enough it needed this untoward incident to relieve the embarrassment that was beginning to be felt by the party, and their natural audacity returned with their host. I do not propose to record the convivialities of that evening. The inquisitive reader will

accept the statement that the conversation was characterized by the same intellectual exaltation, the same cautious reverence, the same fastidious delicacy, the same rhetorical precision, and the same logical and coherent discourse, somewhat later in the evening, which distinguish similar gatherings of the masculine sex in more civilized localities and under more favorable auspices. No glasses were broken in the absence of any; no liquor was uselessly spilt on the floor or table in the scarcity of that article.

It was nearly midnight when the festivities were interrupted. "Hush!" said Dick Bullen, holding up his hand. It was the querulous voice of Johnny from his adjacent closet: "Oh, dad!"

The Old Man arose hurriedly and disappeared in the closet. Presently he reappeared. "His rheumatiz is coming on agin bad," he explained, "and he wants rubbin'." He lifted the demijohn of whiskey from the table and shook it. It was empty. Dick Bullen put down his tin cup with an embarrassed laugh. So did the others. The Old Man examined their contents, and said hopefully, "I reckon that 's enough; he don't need much. You hold on, all o' you, for a

spell, and I 'll be back ; " and vanished in the closet with an old flannel shirt and the whiskey. The door closed but imperfectly, and the following dialogue was distinctly audible : —

" Now, sonny, whar does she ache worst?

" Sometimes over yar and sometimes under yer ; but it 's most powerful from yer to yer. Rub yer, dad."

A silence seemed to indicate a brisk rubbing. Then Johnny : —

" Hevin' a good time out yar, dad ? "

" Yes, sonny."

" To-morrer 's Chrismiss, — ain't it ? "

" Yes, sonny. How does she feel now ? "

" Better. Rub a little furder down. Wot 's Chrismiss, any way ? Wot 's it all about ? "

" Oh, it 's a day."

This exhaustive definition was apparently satisfactory, for there was a silent interval of rubbing. Presently Johnny again : —

" Mar sez that everywhere else but yer everybody gives things to everybody Chris miss, and then she jist waded inter you. She sez thar 's a man they call Sandy Claws, not a white man, you know, but a kind o' Chinemin, comes down the chimbley night afore Chrismiss and gives things to chillern, —

boys like me. Puts 'em in their butes' Thet 's what she tried to play upon me Easy, now, pop, whar are you rubbin' to, — thet 's a mile from the place. She jest made hat up, did n't she, jest to aggrewate me an' rou? Don't rub thar. . . . Why, dad!"

In the great quiet that seemed to have fallen upon the house the sigh of the near pines and the drip of leaves without was very distinct. Johnny's voice, too, was lowered as he went on: "Don't you take on now, for I 'm gettin' all right fast. Wot 's the boys doin' out thar?"

The Old Man partly opened the door and peered through. His guests were sitting there sociably enough, and there were a few silver coins and a lean buckskin purse on the table. "Bettin' on suthin', — some little game or 'nother. They 're all right," he replied to Johnny, and recommenced his rubbing.

"I 'd like to take a hand and win some noney," said Johnny reflectively, after a pause.

The Old Man glibly repeated what was evidently a familiar formula, that if Johnny would wait until he struck it rich in the tunnel, he 'd have lots of money, etc., etc.

"Yes," said Johnny, "but you don't. And whether you strike it or I win it, it 's about the same. It 's all luck. But it 's mighty cur'o's about Chrismiss, — ain't it? Why do they call it Chrismiss?"

Perhaps from some instinctive deference to the overhearing of his guests, or from some vague sense of incongruity, the Old Man's reply was so low as to be inaudible beyond the room.

"Yes," said Johnny, with some slight abatement of interest, "I 've heerd o' *him* before. Thar, that 'll do, dad. I don't ache near so bad as I did. Now wrap me tight in this yer blanket. So. Now," he added in a muffled whisper, "sit down yer by me till I go asleep." To assure himself of obedience, he disengaged one hand from the blanket, and, grasping his father's sleeve, again composed himself to rest.

For some moments the Old Man waited patiently. Then the unwonted stillness of the house excited his curiosity, and without moving from the bed he cautiously opened the door with his disengaged hand, and looked into the main room. To his infinite surprise it was dark and deserted. But even then a smouldering log on the hearth broke,

and by the upspringing blaze he saw the figure of Dick Bullen sitting by the dying embers.

"Hello!"

Dick started, rose, and came somewhat unsteadily toward him.

"Whar 's the boys?" said the Old Man.

"Gone up the cañon on a little *pasear*. They 're coming back for me in a minit. I 'm waitin' round for 'em. What are you starin' at, Old Man?" he added, with a forced laugh; "do you think I 'm drunk?"

The Old Man might have been pardoned the supposition, for Dick's eyes were humid and his face flushed. He loitered and lounged back to the chimney, yawned, shook himself, buttoned up his coat and laughed. "Liquor ain't so plenty as that, Old Man. Now don't you git up," he continued, as the Old Man made a movement to release his sleeve from Johnny's hand. "Don't you mind manners. Sit jest whar you be; I 'm goin' in a jiffy. Thar, that 's them now."

There was a low tap at the door. Dick Bullen opened it quickly, nodded "Good-night" to his host, and disappeared. The Old Man would have followed him but for the hand that still unconsciously grasped his

sleeve. He could have easily disengaged it; it was small, weak, and emaciated. But perhaps because it *was* small, weak, and emaciated he changed his mind, and, drawing his chair closer to the bed, rested his head upon it. In this defenceless attitude the potency of his earlier potations surprised him. The room flickered and faded before his eyes, reappeared, faded again, went out, and left him — asleep.

Meantime Dick Bullen, closing the door, confronted his companions. "Are you ready?" said Staples. "Ready," said Dick; "what 's the time?" "Past twelve," was the reply; "can you make it? — it 's nigh on fifty miles, the round trip hither and yon." "I reckon," returned Dick shortly. "Whar 's the mare?" "Bill and Jack 's holdin' her at the crossin'." "Let 'em hold on a minit longer," said Dick.

He turned and reëntered the house softly. By the light of the guttering candle and dying fire he saw that the door of the little room was open. He stepped toward it on tiptoe and looked in. The Old Man had fallen back in his chair, snoring, his helpless feet thrust out in a line with his collapsed shoulders, and his hat pulled over his eyes.

Beside him, on a narrow wooden bedstead, lay Johnny, muffled tightly in a blanket that hid all save a strip of forehead and a few curls damp with perspiration. Dick Bullen made a step forward, hesitated, and glanced over his shoulder into the deserted room. Everything was quiet. With a sudden resolution he parted his huge mustaches with both hands, and stooped over the sleeping boy. But even as he did so a mischievous blast, lying in wait, swooped down the chimney, rekindled the hearth, and lit up the room with a shameless glow, from which Dick fled in bashful terror.

His companions were already waiting for him at the crossing. Two of them were struggling in the darkness with some strange misshapen bulk, which as Dick came nearer took the semblance of a great yellow horse.

It was the mare. She was not a pretty picture. From her Roman nose to her rising haunches, from her arched spine hidden by the stiff *machillas* of a Mexican saddle, to her thick, straight, bony legs, there was not a line of equine grace. In her half-blind but wholly vicious white eyes, in her protruding under-lip, in her monstrous color, there was nothing but ugliness and vice.

"Now, then," said Staples, "stand cl'ar of her heels, boy, and up with you. Don't miss your first holt of her mane, and mind ye get your off stirrup *quick*. Ready!"

There was a leap, a scrambling struggle, a bound, a wild retreat of the crowd, a circle of flying hoofs, two springless leaps that jarred the earth, a rapid play and jingle of spurs, a plunge, and then the voice of Dick somewhere in the darkness. "All right!"

"Don't take the lower road back onless you're hard pushed for time! Don't hold her in down hill. We 'll be at the ford at five. G'lang! Hoopa! Mula! GO!"

A splash, a spark struck from the ledge in the road, a clatter in the rocky cut beyond, and Dick was gone.

. . . . . .

Sing, O Muse, the ride of Richard Bullen! Sing, O Muse, of chivalrous men! the sacred quest, the doughty deeds, the battery of low churls, the fearsome ride and gruesome perils of the Flower of Simpson's Bar! Alack! she is dainty, this Muse! She will have none of this bucking brute and swaggering, ragged rider, and I must fain follow him in prose, afoot!

It was one o'clock, and yet he had only

gained Rattlesnake Hill. For in that time Jovita had rehearsed to him all her imperfections and practised all her vices. Thrice had she stumbled. Twice had she thrown up her Roman nose in a straight line with the reins, and, resisting bit and spur, struck out madly across country. Twice had she reared, and, rearing, fallen backward; and twice had the agile Dick, unharmed, regained his seat before she found her vicious legs again. And a mile beyond them, at the foot of a long hill, was Rattlesnake Creek. Dick knew that here was the crucial test of his ability to perform his enterprise, set his teeth grimly, put his knees well into her flanks, and changed his defensive tactics to brisk aggression. Bullied and maddened, Jovita began the descent of the hill. Here the artful Richard pretended to hold her in with ostentatious objurgation and well-feigned cries of alarm. It is unnecessary to add that Jovita instantly ran away. Nor need I state the time made in the descent; it is written in the chronicles of Simpson's Bar. Enough that in another moment, as it seemed to Dick, she was splashing on the overflowed banks of Rattlesnake Creek. As Dick expected, the momentum she had ac-

quired carried her beyond the point of balking, and, holding her well together for a mighty leap, they dashed into the middle of the swiftly flowing current. A few moments of kicking, wading, and swimming, and Dick drew a long breath on the opposite bank.

The road from Rattlesnake Creek to Red Mountain was tolerably level. Either the plunge in Rattlesnake Creek had dampened her baleful fire, or the art which led to it had shown her the superior wickedness of her rider, for Jovita no longer wasted her surplus energy in wanton conceits. Once she bucked, but it was from force of habit; once she shied, but it was from a new, freshly-painted meeting-house at the crossing of the county road. Hollows, ditches, gravelly deposits, patches of freshly-springing grasses, flew from beneath her rattling hoofs. She began to smell unpleasantly, once or twice she coughed slightly, but there was no abatement of her strength or speed. By two o'clock he had passed Red Mountain and begun the descent to the plain. Ten minutes later the driver of the fast Pioneer coach was overtaken and passed by a "man on a Pinto hoss," — an event sufficiently notable for remark. At half past two Dick

rose in his stirrups with a great shout. Stars were glittering through the rifted clouds, and beyond him, out of the plain, rose two spires, a flagstaff, and a straggling line of black objects. Dick jingled his spurs and swung his *riata*, Jovita bounded forward, and in another moment they swept into Tuttleville, and drew up before the wooden piazza of "The Hotel of All Nations."

What transpired that night at Tuttleville is not strictly a part of this record. Briefly I may state, however, that after Jovita had been handed over to a sleepy ostler, whom she at once kicked into unpleasant consciousness, Dick sallied out with the barkeeper for a tour of the sleeping town. Lights still gleamed from a few saloons and gambling-houses; but, avoiding these, they stopped before several closed shops, and by persistent tapping and judicious outcry roused the proprietors from their beds, and made them unbar the doors of their magazines and expose their wares. Sometimes they were met by curses, but oftener by interest and some concern in their needs, and the interview was invariably concluded by a drink. It was three o'clock before this pleasantry was given over, and with a small waterproof bag

of India rubber strapped on his shoulders Dick returned to the hotel. But here he was waylaid by Beauty, — Beauty opulent in charms, affluent in dress, persuasive in speech, and Spanish in accent! In vain she repeated the invitation in "Excelsior," happily scorned by all Alpine-climbing youth, and rejected by this child of the Sierras, — a rejection softened in this instance by a laugh and his last gold coin. And then he sprang to the saddle, and dashed down the lonely street and out into the lonelier plain, where presently the lights, the black line of houses, the spires, and the flagstaff sank into the earth behind him again and were lost in the distance.

The storm had cleared away, the air was brisk and cold, the outlines of adjacent landmarks were distinct, but it was half past four before Dick reached the meeting-house and the crossing of the county road. To avoid the rising grade he had taken a longer and more circuitous road, in whose viscid mud Jovita sank fetlock deep at every bound. It was a poor preparation for a steady ascent of five miles more; but Jovita, gathering her legs under her, took it with her usual blind, unreasoning fury, and

a half hour later reached the long level that led to Rattlesnake Creek. Another half hour would bring him to the creek. He threw the reins lightly upon the neck of the mare, chirruped to her, and began to sing.

Suddenly Jovita shied with a bound that would have unseated a less practised rider. Hanging to her rein was a figure that had leaped from the bank, and at the same time from the road before her arose a shadowy horse and rider. "Throw up your hands," commanded the second apparition, with an oath.

Dick felt the mare tremble, quiver, and apparently sink under him. He knew what it meant, and was prepared.

"Stand aside, Jack Simpson. I know you, you d—d thief! Let me pass, or"—

He did not finish the sentence. Jovita rose straight in the air with a terrific bound, throwing the figure from her bit with a single shake of her vicious head, and charged with deadly malevolence down on the impediment before her. An oath, a pistol-shot, horse and highwayman rolled over in the road, and the next moment Jovita was a hundred yards away. But the good right arm of her rider, shattered by a bullet, dropped helplessly at his side.

Without slacking his speed he shifted the reins to his left hand. But a few moments later he was obliged to halt and tighten the saddle-girths that had slipped in the onset. This in his crippled condition took some time. He had no fear of pursuit, but, looking up, he saw that the eastern stars were already paling, and that the distant peaks had lost their ghostly whiteness, and now stood out blackly against a lighter sky. Day was upon him. Then completely absorbed in a single idea, he forgot the pain of his wound, and, mounting again, dashed on towards Rattlesnake Creek. But now Jovita's breath came broken by gasps, Dick reeled in his saddle, and brighter and brighter grew the sky.

Ride, Richard; run, Jovita; linger, O day!

For the last few rods there was a roaring in his ears. Was it exhaustion from a loss of blood, or what? He was dazed and giddy as he swept down the hill, and did not recognize his surroundings. Had he taken the wrong road, or was this Rattlesnake Creek?

It was. But the brawling creek he had swam a few hours before had risen, more

than doubled its volume, and now rolled a swift and resistless river between him and Rattlesnake Hill. For the first time that night Richard's heart sank within him. The river, the mountain, the quickening east, swam before his eyes. He shut them to recover his self-control. In that brief interval, by some fantastic mental process, the little room at Simpson's Bar and the figures of the sleeping father and son rose upon him. He opened his eyes wildly, cast off his coat, pistol, boots, and saddle, bound his precious pack tightly to his shoulders, grasped the bare flanks of Jovita with his bared knees, and with a shout dashed into the yellow water. A cry rose from the opposite bank as the head of a man and horse struggled for a few moments against the battling current, and then were swept away amidst uprooted trees and whirling driftwood.

. . . . . .

The Old Man started and woke. The fire on the hearth was dead, the candle in the outer room flickering in its socket, and somebody was rapping at the door. He opened it, but fell back with a cry before the dripping, half-naked figure that reeled against the doorpost.

"Dick?"

"Hush! Is he awake yet?"

"No; but, Dick" —

"Dry up, you old fool! Get me some whiskey, *quick!*" The Old Man flew, and returned with — an empty bottle! Dick would have sworn, but his strength was not equal to the occasion. He staggered, caught at the handle of the door, and motioned to the Old Man.

"Thar's suthin' in my pack yer for Johnny. Take it off. I can't."

The Old Man unstrapped the pack, and laid it before the exhausted man.

"Open it, quick."

He did so with trembling fingers. It contained only a few poor toys, — cheap and barbaric enough, goodness knows, but bright with paint and tinsel. One of them was broken; another, I fear, was irretrievably ruined by water; and on the third — ah me! there was a cruel spot.

"It don't look like much, that 's a fact," said Dick ruefully. . . . "But it 's the best we could do. . . . Take 'em, Old Man, and put 'em in his stocking, and tell him — tell him, you know — hold me, Old Man" — The Old Man caught at his sinking figure.

"Tell him," said Dick, with a weak little laugh, — "tell him Sandy Claus has come."

And even so, bedraggled, ragged, unshaven and unshorn, with one arm hanging helplessly at his side, Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar, and fell fainting on the first threshold. The Christmas dawn came slowly after, touching the remoter peaks with the rosy warmth of ineffable love. And it looked so tenderly on Simpson's Bar that the whole mountain, as if caught in a generous action, blushed to the skies.

THE FOOL OF FIVE FORKS.

He lived alone. I do not think this peculiarity arose from any wish to withdraw his foolishness from the rest of the camp, nor was it probable that the combined wisdom of Five Forks ever drove him into exile. My impression is that he lived alone from choice, — a choice he made long before the camp indulged in any criticism of his mental capacity. He was much given to moody reticence, and although to outward appearances a strong man was always complaining of ill health. Indeed, one theory of his isolation was that it afforded him better opportunities for taking medicine, of which he habitually consumed large quantities.

His folly first dawned upon Five Forks through the Post Office windows. He was for a long time the only man who wrote home by every mail, his letters being always directed to the same person, — a woman.

Now it so happened that the bulk of the Five Forks' correspondence was usually the other way; there were many letters received, — the majority being in the female hand, — but very few answered.

The men received them indifferently, or as a matter of course; a few opened and read them on the spot with a barely repressed smile of self-conceit, or quite as frequently glanced over them with undisguised impatience. Some of the letters began with "My dear husband," and some were never called for. But the fact that the only regular correspondent of Five Forks never received any reply became at last quite notorious. Consequently, when an envelope was received bearing the stamp of the "Dead Letter Office," addressed to the Fool under the more conventional title of "Cyrus Hawkins," there was quite a fever of excitement. I do not know how the secret leaked out, but it was eventually known to the camp that the envelope contained Hawkins' own letters returned. This was the first evidence of his weakness; any man who repeatedly wrote to a woman who did not reply must be a fool. I think Hawkins suspected that his folly was known to the camp, but he took refuge in

symptoms of chills and fever, which he at once developed, and effected a diversion with three bottles of Indian cholagogue and two boxes of pills. At all events, at the end of a week he resumed a pen, stiffened by tonics, with all his old epistolatory pertinacity. This time the letters had a new address.

In those days a popular belief obtained in the mines that Luck particularly favored the foolish and unscientific. Consequently, when Hawkins struck a "pocket" in the hillside near his solitary cabin, there was but little surprise. "He will sink it all in the next hole," was the prevailing belief, predicated upon the usual manner in which the possessor of "nigger luck" disposed of his fortune. To everybody's astonishment, Hawkins, after taking out about eight thousand dollars, and exhausting the pocket, did not prospect for another. The camp then waited patiently to see what he would do with his money. I think, however, that it was with the greatest difficulty their indignation was kept from taking the form of a personal assault when it became known that he had purchased a draft for eight thousand dollars in favor of "that woman." More than this, it was finally whispered that the draft was

returned to him, as his letters had been, and that he was ashamed to reclaim the money at the express office. "It would n't be a bad speckilation to go East, get some smart gal for a hundred dollars to dress herself up and represent that hag, and jest freeze on to that eight thousand," suggested a far-seeing financier. I may state here that we always alluded to Hawkins' fair unknown as "The Hag," without having, I am confident, the least justification for that epithet.

That the Fool should gamble seemed eminently fit and proper. That he should occasionally win a large stake, according to that popular theory which I have recorded in the preceding paragraph, appeared also a not improbable or inconsistent fact. That he should, however, break the faro bank which Mr. John Hamlin had set up in Five Forks, and carry off a sum variously estimated at from ten to twenty thousand dollars, and not return the next day and lose the money at the same table, really appeared incredible Yet such was the fact. A day or two passed without any known investment of Mr. Hawkins' recently acquired capital. "Ef he allows to send it to that Hag," said one prominent citizen, "suthin' ought to be done!

It 's jest ruinin' the reputation of this yer camp, — this sloshin' around o' capital on non-residents ez don't claim it ! " " It 's settin' an example o' extravagance," said another, " ez is little better nor a swindle. Thar 's mor 'n five men in this camp thet, hearin' thet Hawkins had sent home eight thousand dollars, must jest rise up and send home their hard earnings, too ! And then to think thet that eight thousand was only a bluff, after all, and thet it 's lyin' there on call in Adams & Co.'s bank ! Well ! I say it 's one o' them things a vigilance committee oughter look into ! "

When there seemed no possibility of this repetition of Hawkins' folly, the anxiety to know what he had really done with his money became intense. At last a self-appointed committee of four citizens dropped artfully, but to outward appearances carelessly, upon him in his seclusion. When some polite formalities had been exchanged, and some easy vituperation of a backward season offered by each of the parties, Tom Wingate approached the subject : —

" Sorter dropped heavy on Jack Hamlin the other night, did n't ye ? He allows you did n't give him no show for revenge. I said

you was n't no such d—d fool, did n't I, Dick?" continued the artful Wingate, appealing to a confederate.

"Yes," said Dick promptly. "You said twenty thousand dollars was n't goin' to be thrown around recklessly. You said Cyrus had suthin' better to do with his capital," superadded Dick, with gratuitous mendacity. "I disremember now what partickler investment you said he was goin' to make with it," he continued, appealing with easy indifference to his friend.

Of course Wingate did not reply, but looked at the Fool, who, with a troubled face, was rubbing his legs softly. After a pause he turned deprecatingly toward his visitors.

"Ye did n't enny of ye ever hev a sort of tremblin' in your legs, — a kind o' shakiness from the knee down? Suthin'," he continued, slightly brightening with his topic, — "suthin' that begins like chills and yet ain't chills. A kind o' sensation of goneness here, and a kind o' feelin' as if you might die suddent! When Wright's Pills don't somehow reach the spot, and Quinine don't fetch you?"

"No!" said Wingate, with a curt direct

ness and the air of authoritatively responding for his friends. "No, never had. You was speakin' of this yer investment."

"And your bowels all the time irregular!" continued Hawkins, blushing under Wingate's eye, and yet clinging despairingly to his theme like a shipwrecked mariner to his plank.

Wingate did not reply, but glanced significantly at the rest. Hawkins evidently saw this recognition of his mental deficiency, and said apologetically, "You was saying suthin' about my investment?"

"Yes," said Wingate, so rapidly as to almost take Hawkins' breath away, — "the investment you made in" —

"Rafferty's Ditch," said the Fool, timidly.

For a moment the visitors could only stare blankly at each other. "Rafferty's Ditch," the one notorious failure of Five Forks! Rafferty's Ditch, the impracticable scheme of an utterly unpractical man; Rafferty's Ditch, a ridiculous plan for taking water that could not be got to a place where it was n't wanted! Rafferty's Ditch, that had buried the fortunes of Rafferty and twenty wretched stockholders in its muddy depths!

"And thet 's it, is it?" said Wingate,

after a gloomy pause. "Thet 's it! I see it all now, boys. That 's how ragged Pat Rafferty went down to San Francisco yesterday in store clothes, and his wife and four children went off in a kerridge to Sacramento. Thet 's why them ten workmen of his, ez hed n't a cent to bless themselves with, was playin' billiards last night and eatin' isters. Thet 's whar that money kum frum — one hundred dollars — to pay for thet long advertisement of the new issue of Ditch stock in the Times yesterday. Thet 's why them six strangers were booked at the Magnolia Hotel yesterday. Don't you see — it 's thet money and thet Fool!"

The Fool sat silent. The visitors rose without a word.

"You never took any of them Indian Vegetable Pills?" asked Hawkins timidly of Wingate.

"No," roared Wingate, as he opened the door.

"They tell me that took with the Panacea — they was out o' the Panacea when I went to the drug store last week — they say that took with the Panacea they always effect a certing cure." But by this time Wingate and his disgusted friends had retreated,

slamming the door on the Fool and his ailments.

Nevertheless, in six months the whole affair was forgotten, the money had been spent — the "Ditch" had been purchased by a company of Boston capitalists, fired by the glowing description of an Eastern tourist, who had spent one drunken night at Five Forks — and I think even the mental condition of Hawkins might have remained undisturbed by criticism, but for a singular incident.

It was during an exciting political campaign, when party feeling ran high, that the irascible Captain McFadden, of Sacramento, visited Five Forks. During a heated discussion in the Prairie Rose Saloon, words passed between the Captain and the Honorable Calhoun Bungstarter, ending in a challenge. The Captain bore the infelix reputation of being a notorious duellist and a dead shot: the Captain was unpopular; the Captain was believed to have been sent by the opposition for a deadly purpose; and the Captain was, moreover, a stranger. I am sorry to say that with Five Forks this latter condition did not carry the quality of sanctity or reverence that usually obtains

among other nomads. There was consequently some little hesitation when the Captain turned upon the crowd and asked for some one to act as his friend. To everybody's astonishment, and to the indignation of many, the Fool stepped forward and offered himself in that capacity. I do not know whether Captain McFadden would have chosen him voluntarily, but he was constrained, in the absence of a better man, to accept his services.

The duel never took place! The preliminaries were all arranged, the spot indicated, the men were present with their seconds, there was no interruption from without, there was no explanation or apology passed, — but the duel did *not* take place. It may be readily imagined that these facts, which were all known to Five Forks, threw the whole community into a fever of curiosity. The principals, the surgeon, and one second left town the next day. Only the Fool remained. *He* resisted all questioning, declaring himself held in honor not to divulge; in short, conducted himself with consistent but exasperating folly. It was not until six months had passed that Colonel Starbottle, the second of Calhoun

Bungstarter, in a moment of weakness superinduced by the social glass, condescended to explain. I should not do justice to the parties if I did not give that explanation in the Colonel's own words. I may remark, in passing, that the characteristic dignity of Colonel Starbottle always became intensified by stimulants, and that by the same process all sense of humor was utterly eliminated.

"With the understanding that I am addressing myself confidentially to men of honor," said the Colonel, elevating his chest above the bar-room counter of the Prairie Rose Saloon, "I trust that it will not be necessary for me to protect myself from levity, as I was forced to do in Sacramento on the only other occasion when I entered into an explanation of this delicate affair by — er — er — calling the individual to a personal account — er! I do not believe," added the Colonel, slightly waving his glass of liquor in the air with a graceful gesture of courteous deprecation — "knowing what I do of the present company — that such a course of action is required here. Certainly not — sir — in the home of Mr. Hawkins — er — the gentleman who represented Mr. Bung

starter, whose conduct, ged, sir, is worthy of praise, blank me!"

Apparently satisfied with the gravity and respectful attention of his listeners, Colonel Starbottle smiled relentingly and sweetly, closed his eyes half dreamily, as if to recall his wandering thoughts, and began: —

"As the spot selected was nearest the tenement of Mr. Hawkins, it was agreed that the parties should meet there. They did so promptly at half past six. The morning being chilly, Mr. Hawkins extended the hospitalities of his house with a bottle of Bourbon whiskey, of which all partook but myself. The reason for that exception is, I believe, well known. It is my invariable custom to take brandy, — a wineglass full in a cup of strong coffee, immediately on rising. It stimulates the functions, sir, without producing any blank derangement of the nerves."

The barkeeper, to whom, as an expert, the Colonel had graciously imparted this information, nodded approvingly, and the Colonel, amid a breathless silence, went on: —

"We were about twenty minutes in reaching the spot. The ground was measured, the weapons were loaded, when Mr. Bung-

starter confided to me the information that he was unwell and in great *pain!* On consultation with Mr. Hawkins, it appeared that his principal in a distant part of the field was also suffering and in great pain. The symptoms were such as a medical man would pronounce 'choleraic.' I say *would* have pronounced, for on examination the surgeon was also found to be — er — in pain, and, I regret to say, expressing himself in language unbecoming the occasion. His impression was that some powerful drug had been administered. On referring the question to Mr. Hawkins, he remembered that the bottle of whiskey partaken by them contained a medicine which he had been in the habit of taking, but which, having failed to act upon him, he had concluded to be generally ineffective, and had forgotten. His perfect willingness to hold himself personally responsible to each of the parties, his genuine concern at the disastrous effect of the mistake, mingled with his own alarm at the state of his system, which — er — failed to — er — respond to the peculiar qualities of the medicine, was most becoming to him as a man of honor and a gentleman! After an hour's delay, both principals being com-

pletely exhausted, and abandoned by the surgeon, who was unreasonably alarmed at his own condition, Mr. Hawkins and I agreed to remove our men to Markleville. There, after a further consultation with Mr. Hawkins, an amicable adjustment of all difficulties, honorable to both parties, and governed by profound secrecy, was arranged. I believe," added the Colonel, looking around and setting down his glass, "no gentleman has yet expressed himself other than satisfied with the result."

Perhaps it was the Colonel's manner, but whatever was the opinion of Five Forks regarding the intellectual display of Mr. Hawkins in this affair, there was very little outspoken criticism at the moment. In a few weeks the whole thing was forgotten, except as part of the necessary record of Hawkins' blunders, which was already a pretty full one. Again some later follies conspired to obliterate the past, until, a year later, a valuable lead was discovered in the "Blazing Star" Tunnel, in the hill where he lived, and a large sum was offered him for a portion of his land on the hill-top. Accustomed as Five Forks had become to the exhibition of his folly, it was with aston-

ishment that they learned that he resolutely and decidedly refused the offer. The reason that he gave was still more astounding. He was about to build!

To build a house upon property available for mining purposes was preposterous; to build at all, with a roof already covering him, was an act of extravagance; to build a house of the style he proposed was simply madness!

Yet here were facts. The plans were made and the lumber for the new building was already on the ground, while the shaft of the "Blazing Star" was being sunk below. The site was, in reality, a very picturesque one; the building itself of a style and quality hitherto unknown in Five Forks. The citizens, at first skeptical, during their moments of recreation and idleness gathered doubtingly about the locality. Day by day, in that climate of rapid growths, the building, pleasantly known in the slang of Five Forks as "the Idiot Asylum," rose beside the green oaks and clustering firs of Hawkins' Hill, as if it were part of the natural phenomena. At last it was completed. Then Mr. Hawkins proceeded to furnish it with an expensiveness and extravagance of

outlay quite in keeping with his former idiocy. Carpets, sofas, mirrors, and finally a piano — the only one known in the county, and brought at great expense from Sacramento — kept curiosity at a fever heat. More than that, there were articles and ornaments which a few married experts declared only fit for women. When the furnishing of the house was complete — it had occupied two months of the speculative and curious attention of the camp — Mr. Hawkins locked the front door, put the key in his pocket, and quietly retired to his more humble roof, lower on the hillside!

I have not deemed it necessary to indicate to the intelligent reader all of the theories which obtained in Five Forks during the erection of the building. Some of them may be readily imagined. That "the Hag" had by artful coyness and systematic reticence at last completely subjugated the Fool, and that the new house was intended for the nuptial bower of the (predestined) unhappy pair, was of course the prevailing opinion. But when, after a reasonable time had elapsed, and the house still remained untenanted, the more exasperating conviction forced itself upon the general mind that

the Fool had been for the third time imposed upon. When two months had elapsed, and there seemed no prospect of a mistress for the new house, I think public indignation became so strong that, had "the Hag" arrived, the marriage would have been publicly prevented. But no one appeared that seemed to answer to this idea of an available tenant, and all inquiry of Mr. Hawkins as to his intention in building a house, and not renting it or occupying it, failed to elicit any further information. The reasons that he gave were felt to be vague, evasive, and unsatisfactory. He was in no hurry to move, he said; when he *was* ready, it surely was not strange that he should like to have his house all ready to receive him. He was often seen upon the veranda, of a summer evening, smoking a cigar. It is reported that one night the house was observed to be brilliantly lighted from garret to basement; that a neighbor, observing this, crept toward the open parlor window, and, looking in espied the Fool accurately dressed in even ing costume, lounging upon a sofa in the drawing-room, with the easy air of socially entertaining a large party. Notwithstanding this, the house was unmistakably vacant

that evening, save for the presence of the owner, as the witnesses afterward testified. When this story was first related, a few practical men suggested the theory that Mr. Hawkins was simply drilling himself in the elaborate duties of hospitality against a probable event in his history. A few ventured the belief that the house was haunted. The imaginative editor of the Five Forks "Record" evolved from the depths of his professional consciousness a story that Hawkins' sweetheart had died, and that he regularly entertained her spirit in this beautifully-furnished mausoleum. The occasional spectacle of Hawkins' tall figure pacing the veranda on moonlight nights lent some credence to this theory, until an unlooked-for incident diverted all speculation into another channel.

It was about this time that a certain wild, rude valley, in the neighborhood of Five Forks, had become famous as a picturesque resort. Travellers had visited it, and declared that there were more cubic yards of rough stone cliff and a waterfall of greater height than any they had visited. Correspondents had written it up with extravagant rhetoric and inordinate poetical quotation. Men and

women who had never enjoyed a sunset, a tree, or a flower; who had never appreciated the graciousness or meaning of the yellow sunlight that flecked their homely doorways, or the tenderness of a midsummer's night to whose moonlight they bared their shirt-sleeves or their *tulle* dresses, came from thousands of miles away to calculate the height of this rock, to observe the depth of this chasm, to remark upon the enormous size of this unsightly tree, and to believe with ineffable self-complacency that they really admired nature. And so it came to pass that, in accordance with the tastes or weaknesses of the individual, the more prominent and salient points of the valley were christened, and there was a "Lace Handkerchief Fall," and the "Tears of Sympathy Cataract," and one distinguished orator's "Peak," and several "Mounts" of various noted people, living or dead, and an "Exclamation Point," and a "Valley of Silent Adoration." And, in course of time, empty soda-water bottles were found at the base of the cataract, and greasy newspapers and fragments of ham sandwiches lay at the dusty roots of giant trees. With this, there were frequent irruptions of closely-shaven and tightly-

cravated men and delicate-faced women in the one long street of Five Forks, and a scampering of mules, and an occasional procession of dusty brown-linen cavalry.

A year after "Hawkins' Idiot Asylum" was completed, one day there drifted into the valley a riotous cavalcade of "school-marms," teachers of the San Francisco public schools, out for a holiday. Not severely spectacled Minervas and chastely armed and mailed Pallases, but, I fear for the security of Five Forks, very human, charming, and mischievous young women. At least, so the men thought, working in the ditches and tunnelling on the hillside; and when, in the interests of Science and the mental advancement of Juvenile Posterity, it was finally settled that they should stay in Five Forks two or three days, for the sake of visiting the various mines, and particularly the Blazing Star Tunnel, there was some flutter of masculine anxiety. There was a considerable inquiry for "store clothes," a hopeless over hauling of old and disused raiment, and a general demand for "boiled shirts" and the barber.

Meanwhile, with that supreme audacity and impudent hardihood of the sex when

gregarious, the school-marms rode through the town, admiring openly the handsome faces and manly figures that looked up from the ditches or rose behind the cars of ore at the mouths of tunnels. Indeed, it is alleged that Jenny Forester, backed and supported by seven other equally shameless young women, had openly and publicly waved her handkerchief to the florid Hercules of Five Forks, — one Tom Flynn, formerly of Virginia, — leaving that good-natured but not over-bright giant pulling his blonde mustaches in bashful amazement.

It was a pleasant June afternoon that Miss Nelly Arnot, Principal of the primary department of one of the public schools of San Francisco, having evaded her companions, resolved to put into operation a plan which had lately sprung up in her courageous and mischief-loving fancy. With that wonderful and mysterious instinct of her sex, from whom no secrets of the affections are hid and to whom all hearts are laid open, she had heard the story of Hawkins' folly and the existence of the "Idiot Asylum." Alone, on Hawkins' Hill, she had determined to penetrate its seclusion. Skirting the underbrush at the foot of the hill,

she managed to keep the heaviest timber between herself and the Blazing Star Tunnel at its base, as well as the cabin of Hawkins, half-way up the ascent, until, by a circuitous route, at last she reached, unobserved, the summit. Before her rose, silent, darkened, and motionless, the object of her search. Here her courage failed her, with all the characteristic inconsequence of her sex. A sudden fear of all the dangers she had safely passed — bears, tarantulas, drunken men, and lizards — came upon her. For a moment, as she afterwards expressed it, "she thought she should die." With this belief, probably, she gathered three large stones, which she could hardly lift, for the purpose of throwing a great distance; put two hair-pins in her mouth, and carefully readjusted with both hands two stray braids of her lovely blue-black mane which had fallen in gathering the stones. Then she felt in the pockets of her linen duster for her card-case, handkerchief, pocket-book, and smelling-bottle, and, finding them intact, suddenly assumed an air of easy, ladylike unconcern, went up the steps of the veranda, and demurely pulled the front door-bell, which she knew would not be answered.

After a decent pause, she walked around the encompassing veranda, examining the closed shutters of the French windows until she found one that yielded to her touch. Here she paused again to adjust her coquettish hat by the mirror-like surface of the long sash window that reflected the full length of her pretty figure. And then she opened the window and entered the room.

Although long closed, the house had a smell of newness and of fresh paint that was quite unlike the mouldiness of the conventional haunted house. The bright carpets, the cheerful walls, the glistening oil-cloths, were quite inconsistent with the idea of a ghost. With childish curiosity she began to explore the silent house, at first timidly, — opening the doors with a violent push, and then stepping back from the threshold so make good a possible retreat; and then more boldly, as she became convinced of her security and absolute loneliness. In one of the chambers, the largest, there were fresh flowers in a vase, — evidently gathered that morning; and what seemed still more remarkable, the pitchers and ewers were freshly filled with water. This obliged Miss Nelly to notice another singular fact, namely,

that the house was free from dust, the one most obtrusive and penetrating visitor of Five Forks. The floors and carpets had been recently swept, the chairs and furniture carefully wiped and dusted. If the house *was* haunted, it was possessed by a spirit who had none of the usual indifference to decay and mould. And yet the beds had evidently never been slept in, the very springs of the chair in which she sat creaked stiffly at the novelty, the closet doors opened with the reluctance of fresh paint and varnish, and in spite of the warmth, cleanliness, and cheerfulness of furniture and decoration there was none of the ease of tenancy and occupation. As Miss Nelly afterwards confessed, she longed to "tumble things around," and when she reached the parlor or drawing-room again she could hardly resist the desire. Particularly was she tempted by a closed piano, that stood mutely against the wall. She thought she would open it just to see who was the maker. That done, it would be no harm to try its tone. She did so, with one little foot on the soft pedal. But Miss Nelly was too good a player and too enthusiastic a musician to stop at half measures. She tried it again, — this time

so sincerely that the whole house seemed to spring into voice. Then she stopped and listened. There was no response; the empty rooms seemed to have relapsed into their old stillness. She stepped out on the veranda; a woodpecker recommenced his tapping on an adjacent tree, the rattle of a cart in the rocky gulch below the hill came faintly up. No one was to be seen, far or near. Miss Nelly, reassured, returned. She again ran her fingers over the keys, stopped, caught at a melody running in her mind, half played it, and then threw away all caution. Before five minutes had elapsed she had entirely forgotten herself, and, with her linen duster thrown aside, her straw hat flung on the piano, her white hands bared, and a black loop of her braided hair hanging upon her shoulder, was fairly embarked upon a flowing sea of musical recollection.

She had played perhaps half an hour, when, having just finished an elaborate symphony and resting her hands on the keys, she heard very distinctly and unmistakably the sound of applause from without. In an instant the fires of shame and indignation leaped into her cheeks, and she rose from the instrument and ran to the window, only

in time to catch sight of a dozen figures in blue and red flannel shirts vanishing hurriedly through the trees below.

Miss Nelly's mind was instantly made up. I think I have already intimated that under the stimulus of excitement she was not wanting in courage, and as she quietly resumed her gloves, hat, and duster she was not, perhaps, exactly the young person that it would be entirely safe for the timid, embarrassed, or inexperienced of my sex to meet alone. She shut down the piano, and having carefully reclosed all the windows and doors, and restored the house to its former desolate condition, she stepped from the veranda and proceeded directly to the cabin of the unintellectual Hawkins, that reared its adobe chimney above the umbrage, a quarter of a mile below.

The door opened instantly to her impulsive knock, and the Fool of Five Forks stood before her. Miss Nelly had never before seen the man designated by this infelicitous title, and as he stepped backward, in half courtesy and half astonishment, she was for the moment disconcerted. He was tall, finely formed, and dark-bearded. Above cheeks a little hollowed by care and ill health

shone a pair of hazel eyes, very large, very gentle, but inexpressibly sad and mournful. This was certainly not the kind of man Miss Nelly had expected to see, yet, after her first embarrassment had passed, the very circumstance, oddly enough, added to her indignation and stung her wounded pride still more deeply. Nevertheless, the arch hypocrite instantly changed her tactics, with the swift intuition of her sex.

"I have come," she said, with a dazzling smile, infinitely more dangerous than her former dignified severity, "I have come to ask your pardon for a great liberty I have just taken. I believe the new house above us on the hill is yours. I was so much pleased with its exterior that I left my friends for a moment below here," she continued artfully, with a slight wave of the hand, as if indicating a band of fearless Amazons without, and waiting to avenge any possible insult offered to one of their number, "and ventured to enter it. Finding it unoccupied, as I had been told, I am afraid I had the audacity to sit down and amuse myself for a few moments at the piano, while waiting for my friends."

Hawkins raised his beautiful eyes to her's,

He saw a very pretty girl, with frank gray eyes glistening with excitement, with two red, slightly freckled cheeks, glowing a little under his eyes, with a short scarlet upper lip turned back, like a rose leaf, over a little line of white teeth, as she breathed somewhat hurriedly in her nervous excitement. He saw all this calmly, quietly, and, save for the natural uneasiness of a shy, reticent man, I fear without a quickening of his pulse.

"I knowed it," he said simply. "I heerd ye as I kem up."

Miss Nelly was furious at his grammar, his dialect, his coolness, and still more at the suspicion that he was an active member of her invisible *claque*.

"Ah," she said, still smiling, "then I think I heard *you*" —

"I reckon not," he interrupted gravely. "I did n't stay long. I found the boys hanging round the house, and I allowed at first I 'd go in and kinder warn you; but they promised to keep still, and you looked so comfortable and wrapped up in your music that I had n't the heart to disturb you, and kem away. I hope," he added earnestly, "they did n't let on ez they heerd you. They aint a bad lot, — them Blazin' Star boys, —

though they 're a little hard at times. But they 'd no more hurt ye than they would a — a — a cat!" continued Mr. Hawkins, blushing with a faint apprehension of the inelegance of his simile.

"No! no!" said Miss Nelly, feeling suddenly very angry with herself, the Fool, and the entire male population of Five Forks. "No! I have behaved foolishly, I suppose, and if they *had* it would have served me right. But I only wanted to apologize to you. You 'll find everything as you left it. Good-day!"

She turned to go. Mr. Hawkins began to feel embarrassed. "I 'd have asked ye to sit down," he said, finally, "if it hed been a place fit for a lady. I oughter done so, enny way. I don't know what kept me from it. But I ain't well, Miss. Times I get a sort o' dumb ager, — it 's the ditches, I think, Miss, — and I don't seem to hev my wits about me."

Instantly Miss Arnot was all sympathy; her quick woman's heart was touched.

"Can I — can anything be done?" she asked, more timidly than she had before spoken.

"No! — not onless ye remember suthin'

about these pills." He exhibited a box containing about half a dozen. "I forget the direction, — I don't seem to remember much, any way, these times, — they 're Jones' Vegetable Compound. If ye 've ever took 'em ye 'll remember whether the reg'lar dose is eight. They ain't but six here. But perhaps ye never tuk any," he added deprecatingly.

"No," said Miss Nelly, curtly. She had usually a keen sense of the ludicrous, but somehow Mr. Hawkins' eccentricity only pained her.

"Will you let me see you to the foot of the hill?" he said again, after another embarrassing pause.

Miss Arnot felt instantly that such an act would condone her trespass in the eyes of the world. She might meet some of her invisible admirers, or even her companions; and, with all her erratic impulses, she was nevertheless a woman, and did not entirely despise the verdict of conventionality. She smiled sweetly and assented, and in another moment the two were lost in the shadows of the wood.

Like many other apparently trivial acts in an uneventful life, it was decisive. As

she expected, she met two or three of her late applauders, whom, she fancied, looked sheepish and embarrassed; she met also her companions, looking for her in some alarm, who really appeared astonished at her escort, and, she fancied, a trifle envious of her evident success. I fear that Miss Arnot, in response to their anxious inquiries, did not state entirely the truth, but, without actual assertion, led them to believe that she had at a very early stage of the proceeding completely subjugated this weak-minded giant, and had brought him triumphantly to her feet. From telling this story two or three times she got finally to believing that she had some foundation for it, then to a vague sort of desire that it would eventually prove to be true, and then to an equally vague yearning to hasten that consummation. That it would redound to any satisfaction of the Fool she did not stop to doubt. That it would cure him of his folly she was quite confident. Indeed, there are very few of us — men or women — who do not believe that even a hopeless love for ourselves is more conducive to the salvation of the lover than a requited affection for another.

The criticism of Five Forks was, as the

reader may imagine, swift and conclusive. When it was found out that Miss Arnot was not "the Hag" masquerading as a young and pretty girl, to the ultimate deception of Five Forks in general and the Fool in particular, it was decided at once that nothing but the speedy union of the Fool and the "pretty school-marm" was consistent with ordinary common sense. The singular good fortune of Hawkins was quite in accordance with the theory of his luck as propounded by the camp. That after "the Hag" failed to make her appearance he should "strike a lead" in his own house, without the trouble of "prospectin'," seemed to these casuists as a wonderful but inevitable law. To add to these fateful probabilities, Miss Arnot fell and sprained her ankle in the ascent of Mount Lincoln, and was confined for some weeks to the hotel after her companions had departed. During this period Hawkins was civilly but grotesquely attentive. When, after a reasonable time had elapsed, there still appeared to be no immediate prospect of the occupancy of the new house, public opinion experienced a singular change in regard to its theories of Mr. Hawkins' conduct. "The Hag" was looked upon as a

saint-like and long-suffering martyr to the weaknesses and inconsistency of the Fool. That, after erecting this new house at her request, he had suddenly "gone back" on her; that his celibacy was the result of a long habit of weak proposal and subsequent shameless rejection; and that he was now trying his hand on the helpless school-marm, was perfectly plain to Five Forks. That he should be frustrated in his attempts at any cost was equally plain. Miss Nelly suddenly found herself invested with a rude chivalry that would have been amusing had it not been at times embarrassing; that would have been impertinent but for the almost superstitious respect with which it was proffered. Every day somebody from Five Forks rode out to inquire the health of the fair patient. "Hez Hawkins bin over yer to-day?" queried Tom Flynn, with artful ease and indifference, as he leaned over Miss Nelly's easy-chair on the veranda. Miss Nelly, with a faint pink flush on her cheek, was constrained to answer "No." "Well, he sorter sprained his foot agin a rock yesterday," continued Flynn, with shameless untruthfulness. "You mus' n't think anything o' that, Miss Arnot. He 'll be over

yer to-morrer, and meantime he told me to hand this yer bookay with his regards, and this yer specimen!" And Mr. Flynn laid down the flowers he had picked *en rout* against such an emergency, and presented respectfully a piece of quartz and gold which he had taken that morning from his own sluice-box. "You mus' n't mind Hawkins' ways, Miss Nelly," said another sympathizing miner. "There ain't a better man in camp than that theer Cy Hawkins! — but he don't understand the ways o' the world with wimen. He has n't mixed as much with society as the rest of us," he added, with an elaborate Chesterfieldian ease of manner, "but he means well." Meanwhile a few other sympathetic tunnel-men were impressing upon Mr. Hawkins the necessity of the greatest attention to the invalid. "It won't do, Hawkins," they explained, "to let that there gal go back to San Francisco and say that when she was sick and alone, the only man in Five Forks under whose roof she had rested, and at whose table she had sat" — this was considered a natural but pardonable exaggeration of rhetoric — "ever threw off on her; and it sha'n't be done. It ain't the square thing to Five Forks." And

then the Fool would rush away to the valley, and be received by Miss Nelly with a certain reserve of manner that finally disappeared in a flush of color, some increased vivacity, and a pardonable coquetry. And so the days passed; Miss Nelly grew better in health and more troubled in mind, and Mr. Hawkins became more and more embarrassed, and Five Forks smiled and rubbed its hands, and waited for the approaching dénouement. And then it came. But not perhaps in the manner that Five Forks had imagined.

It was a lovely afternoon in July that a party of Eastern tourists rode into Five Forks. They had just "done" the Valley of Big Things, and there being one or two Eastern capitalists among the party, it was deemed advisable that a proper knowledge of the practical mining resources of California should be added to their experience of the merely picturesque in Nature. Thus far everything had been satisfactory; the amount of water which passed over the Fall was large, owing to a backward season; some snow still remained in the cañons near the highest peaks; they had ridden round one of the biggest trees, and through the

prostrate trunk of another. To say that they were delighted is to express feebly the enthusiasm of these ladies and gentlemen, drunk with the champagny hospitality of their entertainers, the utter novelty of scene, and the dry, exhilarating air of the valley. One or two had already expressed themselves ready to live and die there; another had written a glowing account to the Eastern press, depreciating all other scenery in Europe and America; and under these circumstances it was reasonably expected that Five Forks would do its duty, and equally impress the stranger after its own fashion.

Letters to this effect were sent from San Francisco by prominent capitalists there, and under the able superintendence of one of their agents, the visitors were taken in hand, shown "what was to be seen," carefully restrained from observing what ought not to be visible, and so kept in a blissful and enthusiastic condition. And so the graveyard of Five Forks, in which but two of the occupants had died natural deaths, the dreary, ragged cabins on the hillsides, with their sad-eyed, cynical, broken-spirited occupants, toiling on, day by day, for a miserable pittance and a fare that a self-respect-

ing Eastern mechanic would have scornfully rejected, were not a part of the Eastern visitors' recollection. But the hoisting works and machinery of the Blazing Star Tunnel Company was — the Blazing Star Tunnel Company, whose "gentlemanly Superintendent" had received private information from San Francisco to do the "proper thing" for the party. Wherefore the valuable heaps of ore in the company's works were shown, the oblong bars of gold — ready for shipment — were playfully offered to the ladies who could lift and carry them away unaided, and even the tunnel itself, gloomy, fateful, and peculiar, was shown as part of the experience; and, in the noble language of one correspondent, "the wealth of Five Forks and the peculiar inducements that it offered to Eastern capitalists" were established beyond a doubt. And then occurred a little incident which, as an unbiassed spectator, I am free to say offered no inducements to anybody whatever, but which, for its bearing upon the central figure of this veracious chronicle, I cannot pass over.

It had become apparent to one or two more practical and sober-minded in the party that certain portions of the Blazing Star

Tunnel — (owing, perhaps, to the exigencies of a flattering annual dividend) — were economically and imperfectly "shored" and supported, and were consequently unsafe, insecure, and to be avoided. Nevertheless, at a time when champagne corks were popping in dark corners, and enthusiastic voices and happy laughter rang through the half-lighted levels and galleries, there came a sudden and mysterious silence. A few lights dashed swiftly by in the direction of a distant part of the gallery, and then there was a sudden sharp issuing of orders, and a dull, ominous rumble. Some of the visitors turned pale — one woman fainted!

Something had happened. What? "Nothing" — the speaker is fluent but uneasy — "one of the gentlemen in trying to dislodge a 'specimen' from the wall had knocked away a support. There had been a 'cave' — the gentleman was caught and buried below his shoulders. It was all right — they 'd get him out in a moment — only it required great care to keep from extending the 'cave.' Did n't know his name — it was that little man — the husband of that lively lady with the black eyes. Eh! Hullo there! Stop her! For God's sake! — not that way!

She 'll fall from that shaft! She 'll be killed!"

But the lively lady was already gone. With staring black eyes, imploringly trying to pierce the gloom, with hands and feet that sought to batter and break down the thick darkness, with incoherent cries and supplications, following the moving of *ignis fatuus* lights ahead, she ran and ran swiftly! Ran over treacherous foundations, ran by yawning gulfs, ran past branching galleries and arches, ran wildly, ran despairingly, ran blindly, and at last ran into the arms of the Fool of Five Forks.

In an instant she caught at his hand. "Oh, save him!" she cried; "you belong here — you know this dreadful place; bring me to him. Tell me where to go and what to do, I implore you! Quick, he is dying! Come!"

He raised his eyes to hers, and then, with a sudden cry, dropped the rope and crowbar he was carrying, and reeled against the wall. "Annie!" he gasped, slowly, "is it you?"

She caught at both his hands, brought her face to his with staring eyes, murmured "Good God, Cyrus!" and sank upon her knees before him.

He tried to disengage the hand that she wrung with passionate entreaty.

"No, no! Cyrus, you will forgive me — you will forget the past! God has sent you here to-day. You will come with me. You will — you must — save him!"

"Save who?" cried Cyrus hoarsely.

"My husband!"

The blow was so direct — so strong and overwhelming — that even through her own stronger and more selfish absorption she saw it in the face of the man, and pitied him.

"I thought — you — knew — it!" she faltered. He did not speak, but looked at her with fixed, dumb eyes. And then the sound of distant voices and hurrying feet started her again into passionate life. She once more caught his hand.

"Oh, Cyrus! hear me! If you have loved me through all these years, you will not fail me now. You must save him! You can! You are brave and strong — you always were, Cyrus! You will save him, Cyrus, for my sake — for the sake of your love for me! You will — I know it! God bless you!"

She rose as if to follow him, but at a gesture of command she stood still. He picked

up the rope and crowbar slowly, and in a dazed, blinded way that, in her agony of impatience and alarm, seemed protracted to cruel infinity. Then he turned, and raising her hand to his lips, he kissed it slowly, looked at her again — and the next moment was gone.

He did not return. For at the end of the next half-hour, when they laid before her the half-conscious, breathing body of her husband, safe and unharmed but for exhaustion and some slight bruises, she learned that the worst fears of the workmen had been realized. In releasing him a second "cave" had taken place. They had barely time to snatch away the helpless body of her husband before the strong frame of his rescuer, Cyrus Hawkins, was struck and smitten down in his place.

For two hours he lay there crushed and broken-limbed, with a broken beam lying across his breast, in sight of all, conscious and patient. For two hours they had labored around him, wildly, despairingly, hopefully, with the wills of gods and the strength of giants, and at the end of that time they came to an upright timber which rested its base upon the beam. There was

a cry for axes, and one was already swinging in the air, when the dying man called to them, feebly —

"Don't cut that upright!"

"Why?"

"It will bring down the whole gallery with it."

"How?"

"It 's one of the foundations of my house."

The axe fell from the workman's hand, and with a blanched face he turned to his fellows. It was too true. They were in the uppermost gallery, and the "cave" had taken place directly below the new house. After a pause, the Fool spoke again, more feebly.

"The lady! — quick!"

They brought her — a wretched, fainting creature, with pallid face and streaming eyes — and fell back as she bent her face above him.

"It was built for you, Annie, darling," he said in a hurried whisper, "and has been waiting up there for you and me all these long days. It 's deeded to you, Annie, and you must — live there — with *him!* He will not mind that I shall be always near you — for it stands above — my grave!"

And he was right. In a few minutes later, when he had passed away, they did not move him, but sat by his body all night, with a torch at his feet and head. And the next day they walled up the gallery as a vault, but they put no mark or any sign thereon, trusting rather to the monument that, bright and cheerful, rose above him in the sunlight of the hill. For they said: "This is not an evidence of death and gloom and sorrow, as are other monuments, but is a sign of Life and Light and Hope, wherefore shall all men know that he who lies under it — is a Fool!"

THE ROMANCE OF MADROÑO HOLLOW.

The latch on the garden gate of the Folinsbee Ranch clicked twice. The gate itself was so much in shadow, that lovely night, that "old man Folinsbee," sitting on his porch, could distinguish nothing but a tall white hat and beside it a few fluttering ribbons, under the pines that marked the entrance. Whether because of this fact, or that he considered a sufficient time had elapsed since the clicking of the latch for more positive disclosure, I do not know; but after a few moments' hesitation he quietly laid aside his pipe and walked slowly down the winding path toward the gate. At the Ceanothus hedge he stopped and listened.

There was not much to hear. The hat was saying to the ribbons that it was a fine night, and remarking generally upon the clear outline of the Sierras against the blue-black sky. The ribbons, it so appeared,

had admired this all the way home, and asked the hat if it had ever seen anything half so lovely as the moonlight on the summit. The hat never had; it recalled some lovely nights in the South in Alabama ("in the South in Ahlabahm" was the way the old man heard it), but then there were other things that made this night seem so pleasant. The ribbons could not possibly conceive what the hat could be thinking about. At this point there was a pause, of which Mr. Folinsbee availed himself to walk very grimly and craunchingly down the gravel-walk toward the gate. Then the hat was lifted, and disappeared in the shadow, and Mr. Folinsbee confronted only the half-foolish, half-mischievous, but wholly pretty face of his daughter.

It was afterwards known to Madroño Hollow that sharp words passed between "Miss Jo" and the old man, and that the latter coupled the names of one Culpepper Starbottle and his uncle, Colonel Starbottle, with certain uncomplimentary epithets, and that Miss Jo retaliated sharply. "Her father's blood before her father's face boiled up and proved her truly of his race," quoted the blacksmith, who leaned toward the noble

verse of Byron. "She saw the old man's bluff and raised him," was the directer comment of the college-bred Masters.

Meanwhile the subject of these animadversions proceeded slowly along the road to a point where the Folinsbee mansion came in view, — a long, narrow, white building, unpretentious, yet superior to its neighbors, and bearing some evidences of taste and refinement in the vines that clambered over its porch, in its French windows, and the white muslin curtains that kept out the fierce California sun by day, and were now touched with silver in the gracious moonlight. Culpepper leaned against the low fence, and gazed long and earnestly at the building. Then the moonlight vanished, ghostlike, from one of the windows, a material glow took its place, and a girlish figure, holding a candle, drew the white curtains together. To Culpepper it was a vestal virgin standing before a hallowed shrine; to the prosaic observer I fear it was only a dark-haired young woman, whose wicked black eyes still shone with unfilial warmth. Howbeit, when the figure had disappeared he stepped out briskly into the moonlight of the high-road. Here he took

off his distinguishing hat to wipe his forehead, and the moon shone full upon his face.

It was not an unprepossessing one, albeit a trifle too thin and lank and bilious to be altogether pleasant. The cheek-bones were prominent, and the black eyes sunken in their orbits. Straight black hair fell slantwise off a high but narrow forehead, and swept part of a hollow cheek. A long black mustache followed the perpendicular curves of his mouth. It was on the whole a serious, even Quixotic face, but at times it was relieved by a rare smile of such tender and even pathetic sweetness, that Miss Jo is reported to have said that, if it would only last through the ceremony, she would have married its possessor on the spot. "I once told him so," added that shameless young woman; "but the man instantly fell into a settled melancholy, and has n't smiled since."

A half-mile below the Folinsbee Ranch the white road dipped and was crossed by a trail that ran through Madroño Hollow. Perhaps because it was a near cut-off to the settlement, perhaps from some less practical reason, Culpepper took this trail, and in a few moments stood among the rarely beauti-

ful trees that gave their name to the valley. Even in that uncertain light the weird beauty of these harlequin masqueraders was apparent; their red trunks — a blush in the moonlight, a deep blood-stain in the shadow — stood out against the silvery green foliage. It was as if Nature in some gracious moment had here caught and crystallized the gypsy memories of the transplanted Spaniard, to cheer him in his lonely exile.

As Culpepper entered the grove, he heard loud voices. As he turned toward a clump of trees, a figure so *bizarre* and characteristic that it might have been a resident Daphne — a figure overdressed in crimson silk and lace, with bare brown arms and shoulders, and a wreath of honeysuckle — stepped out of the shadow. It was followed by a man. Culpepper started. To come to the point briefly, he recognized in the man the features of his respected uncle, Colonel Starbottle; in the female, a lady who may be briefly described as one possessing absolutely no claim to an introduction to the polite reader. To hurry over equally unpleasant details, both were evidently under the influence of liquor.

From the excited conversation that ensued,

Culpepper gathered that some insult had been put upon the lady at a public ball which she had attended that evening; that the Colonel, her escort, had failed to resent it with the sanguinary completeness that she desired. I regret that, even in a liberal age, I may not record the exact and even picturesque language in which this was conveyed to her hearers. Enough that, at the close of a fiery peroration, with feminine inconsistency she flew at the gallant Colonel, and would have visited her delayed vengeance upon his luckless head, but for the prompt interference of Culpepper. Thwarted in this, she threw herself upon the ground, and then into unpicturesque hysterics. There was a fine moral lesson, not only in this grotesque performance of a sex which cannot afford to be grotesque, but in the ludicrous concern with which it inspired the two men. Culpepper, to whom woman was more or less angelic, was pained and sympathetic; the Colonel, to whom she was more or less improper, was exceedingly terrified and embarrassed. Howbeit the storm was soon over, and after Mistress Dolores had returned a little dagger to its sheath (her garter), she quietly took herself out of Madroño

Hollow, and happily out of these pages forever. The two men, left to themselves, conversed in low tones. Dawn stole upon them before they separated: the Colonel quite sobered and in full possession of his usual jaunty self-assertion; Culpepper with a baleful glow in his hollow cheek, and in his dark eyes a rising fire.

The next morning the general ear of Madroño Hollow was filled with rumors of the Colonel's mishap. It was asserted that he had been invited to withdraw his female companion from the floor of the Assembly Ball at the Independence Hotel, and that, failing to do this, both were expelled. It is to be regretted that in 1854 public opinion was divided in regard to the propriety of this step, and that there was some discussion as to the comparative virtue of the ladies who were not expelled; but it was generally conceded that the real *casus belli* was political. "Is this a dashed Puritan meeting?" had asked the Colonel, savagely. "It 's no Pike County shindig," had responded the floor-manager, cheerfully. "You 're a Yank!" had screamed the Colonel, profanely qualifying the noun. "Get! you border ruffian," was the reply. Such at least was the sub-

stance of the reports. As, at that sincere epoch, expressions like the above were usually followed by prompt action, a fracas was confidently looked for.

Nothing, however, occurred. Colonel Starbottle made his appearance next day upon the streets with somewhat of his usual pomposity, a little restrained by the presence of his nephew, who accompanied him, and who, as a universal favorite, also exercised some restraint upon the curious and impertinent. But Culpepper's face wore a look of anxiety quite at variance with his usual grave repose. "The Don don't seem to take the old man's set-back kindly," observed the sympathizing blacksmith. "P'r'aps he was sweet on Dolores himself," suggested the skeptical expressman.

It was a bright morning, a week after this occurrence, that Miss Jo Folinsbee stepped from her garden into the road. This time the latch did not click as she cautiously closed the gate behind her. After a moment's irresolution, which would have been awkward but that it was charmingly employed, after the manner of her sex, in adjusting a bow under a dimpled but rather prominent chin, and in pulling down the

fingers of a neatly fitting glove, she tripped toward the settlement. Small wonder that a passing teamster drove his six mules into the wayside ditch and imperilled his load, to keep the dust from her spotless garments; small wonder that the "Lightning Express" withheld its speed and flash to let her pass, and that the expressman, who had never been known to exchange more than rapid monosyllables with his fellow-man, gazed after her with breathless admiration. For she was certainly attractive. In a country where the ornamental sex followed the example of youthful Nature, and were prone to overdress and glaring efflorescence, Miss Jo's simple and tasteful raiment added much to the physical charm of, if it did not actually suggest a sentiment to, her presence. It is said that Euchre-deck Billy, working in the gulch at the crossing, never saw Miss Folinsbee pass but that he always remarked apologetically to his partner, that "he believed he *must* write a letter home." Even Bill Masters, who saw her in Paris presented to the favorable criticism of that most fastidious man, the late Emperor, said that she was stunning, but a big discount on what she was at Madroño Hollow.

It was still early morning, but the sun, with California extravagance, had already begun to beat hotly on the little chip hat and blue ribbons, and Miss Jo was obliged to seek the shade of a by-path. Here she received the timid advances of a vagabond yellow dog graciously, until, emboldened by his success, he insisted upon accompanying her, and, becoming slobberingly demonstrative, threatened her spotless skirt with his dusty paws, when she drove him from her with some slight acerbity, and a stone which haply fell within fifty feet of its destined mark. Having thus proved her ability to defend herself, with characteristic inconsistency she took a small panic, and, gathering her white skirts in one hand, and holding the brim of her hat over her eyes with the other, she ran swiftly at least a hundred yards before she stopped. Then she began picking some ferns and a few wild-flowers still spared to the withered fields, and then a sudden distrust of her small ankles seized her, and she inspected them narrowly for those burrs and bugs and snakes which are supposed to lie in wait for helpless womanhood. Then she plucked some golden heads of wild oats, and with a sudden inspiration

placed them in her black hair, and then came quite unconsciously upon the trail leading to Madroño Hollow.

Here she hesitated. Before her ran the little trail, vanishing at last into the bosky depths below. The sun was very hot. She must be very far from home. Why should she not rest awhile under the shade of a madroño?

She answered these questions by going there at once. After thoroughly exploring the grove, and satisfying herself that it contained no other living human creature, she sat down under one of the largest trees, with a satisfactory little sigh. Miss Jo loved the madroño. It was a cleanly tree; no dust ever lay upon its varnished leaves; its immaculate shade never was known to harbor grub or insect.

She looked up at the rosy arms interlocked and arched above her head. She looked down at the delicate ferns and cryptogams at her feet. Something glittered at the root of the tree. She picked it up; it was a bracelet. She examined it carefully for cipher or inscription; there was none. She could not resist a natural desire to clasp it on her arm, and to survey it from that

advantageous view-point. This absorbed her attention for some moments; and when she looked up again she beheld at a little distance Culpepper Starbottle.

He was standing where he had halted, with instinctive delicacy, on first discovering her. Indeed, he had even deliberated whether he ought not to go away without disturbing her. But some fascination held him to the spot. Wonderful power of humanity! Far beyond jutted an outlying spur of the Sierra, vast, compact, and silent. Scarcely a hundred yards away, a league-long chasm dropped its sheer walls of granite a thousand feet. On every side rose up the serried ranks of pine-trees, in whose close-set files centuries of storm and change had wrought no breach. Yet all this seemed to Culpepper to have been planned by an all-wise Providence as the natural background to the figure of a pretty girl in a yellow dress.

Although Miss Jo had confidently expected to meet Culpepper somewhere in her ramble, now that he came upon her suddenly, she felt disappointed and embarrassed. His manner, too, was more than usually grave and serious, and more than

ever seemed to jar upon that audacious levity which was this giddy girl's power and security in a society where all feeling was dangerous. As he approached her she rose to her feet, but almost before she knew it he had taken her hand and drawn her to a seat beside him. This was not what Miss Jo had expected, but nothing is so difficult to predicate as the exact preliminaries of a declaration of love.

What did Culpepper say? Nothing, I fear, that will add anything to the wisdom of the reader; nothing, I fear, that Miss Jo had not heard substantially from other lips before. But there was a certain conviction, fire-speed, and fury in the manner that was deliciously novel to the young lady. It was certainly something to be courted in the nineteenth century with all the passion and extravagance of the sixteenth; it was something to hear, amid the slang of a frontier society, the language of knight-errantry poured into her ear by this lantern-jawed, dark-browed descendant of the Cavaliers.

I do not know that there was anything more in it. The facts, however, go to show that at a certain point Miss Jo dropped her glove, and that in recovering it Culpepper

possessed himself first of her hand and then her lips. When they stood up to go, Culpepper had his arm around her waist, and her black hair, with its sheaf of golden oats, rested against the breast pocket of his coat. But even then I do not think her fancy was entirely captive. She took a certain satisfaction in this demonstration of Culpepper's splendid height, and mentally compared it with a former flame, one Lieutenant McMirk, an active, but under-sized Hector, who subsequently fell a victim to the incautiously composed and monotonous beverages of a frontier garrison. Nor was she so much preoccupied but that her quick eyes, even while absorbing Culpepper's glances, were yet able to detect, at a distance, the figure of a man approaching. In an instant she slipped out of Culpepper's arm, and, whipping her hands behind her, said, "There 's that horrid man!"

Culpepper looked up and beheld his respected uncle panting and blowing over the hill. His brow contracted as he turned to Miss Jo: "You don't like my uncle!"

"I hate him!" Miss Jo was recovering her ready tongue.

Culpepper blushed. He would have liked

to enter upon some details of the Colonel's pedigree and exploits, but there was not time. He only smiled sadly. The smile melted Miss Jo. She held out her hand quickly, and said, with even more than her usual effrontery, "Don't let that man get you into any trouble. Take care of yourself, dear, and don't let anything happen to you."

Miss Jo intended this speech to be pathetic; the tenure of life among her lovers had hitherto been very uncertain. Culpepper turned toward her, but she had already vanished in the thicket.

The Colonel came up, panting. "I 've looked all over town for you, and be dashed to you, sir. Who was that with you?"

"A lady." (Culpepper never lied, but he was discreet.)

"D—n 'em all! Look yar, Culp, I 've spotted the man who gave the order to put me off the floor" ("flo" was what the Colonel said) "the other night!"

"Who was it?" asked Culpepper, listlessly.

"Jack Folinsbee."

"Who?"

"Why, the son of that dashed nigger

worshipping, psalm-singing Puritan Yankee. What 's the matter, now? Look yar, Culp, you ain't goin' back on your blood, ar' ye? You ain't goin' back on your word? Ye ain't going down at the feet of this trash, like a whipped hound?"

Culpepper was silent. He was very white. Presently he looked up, and said quietly, "No."

Culpepper Starbottle had challenged Jack Folinsbee, and the challenge was accepted. The cause alleged was the expelling of Culpepper's uncle from the floor of the Assembly Ball by the order of Folinsbee. This much Madroño Hollow knew, and could swear to; but there were other strange rumors afloat, of which the blacksmith was an able expounder. "You see, gentlemen," he said to the crowd gathered around his anvil, "I ain't got no theory of this affair, I only give a few facts as have come to my knowledge. Culpepper and Jack meets quite accidental like in Bob's saloon. Jack goes up to Culpepper and says, 'A word with you.' Culpepper bows and steps aside in this way, Jack standing about *here*." (The blacksmith demonstrates the position of the par-

ties with two old horseshoes on the anvil.) "Jack pulls a bracelet from his pocket and says, 'Do you know that bracelet?' Culpepper says, 'I do not,' quite cool-like and easy. Jack says, 'You gave it to my sister.' Culpepper says, still cool as you please, 'I did not.' Jack says, 'You lie, G—d d—n you,' and draws his derringer. Culpepper jumps forward about here" (reference is made to the diagram) "and Jack fires. Nobody hit. It's a mighty cur'o's thing, gentlemen," continued the blacksmith, dropping suddenly into the abstract, and leaning meditatively on his anvil,— "it 's a mighty cur'o's thing that nobody gets hit so often. You and me empties our revolvers sociably at each other over a little game, and the room full, and nobody gets hit! That 's what gets me."

"Never mind, Thompson," chimed in Bill Masters, "there 's another and a better world where we shall know all that, and — become better shots. Go on with your story."

"Well, some grabs Culpepper and some grabs Jack, and so separates them. Then Jack tells 'em as how he had seen his sister wear a bracelet which he knew was one that had been given to Dolores by Colonel Star-

bottle. That Miss Jo would n't say where she got it, but owned up to having seen Culpepper that day. Then the most cur'o's thing of it yet, what does Culpepper do but rise up and takes all back that he said, and allows that he *did* give her the bracelet. Now my opinion, gentlemen, is that he lied; it ain't like that man to give a gal that he respects anything off that piece, Dolores. But it 's all the same now, and there 's but one thing to be done."

The way this one thing was done belongs to the record of Madroño Hollow. The morning was bright and clear; the air was slightly chill, but that was from the mist which arose along the banks of the river. As early as six o'clock the designated ground — a little opening in the madroño grove — was occupied by Culpepper Starbottle, Colonel Starbottle, his second, and the surgeon. The Colonel was exalted and excited, albeit in a rather imposing, dignified way, and pointed out to the surgeon the excellence of the ground, which at that hour was wholly shaded from the sun, whose steady stare is more or less discomposing to your duellist. The surgeon threw himself on the grass and smoked his cigar. Culpep-

per, quiet and thoughtful, leaned against a tree and gazed up the river. There was a strange suggestion of a picnic about the group, which was heightened when the Colonel drew a bottle from his coat-tails, and, taking a preliminary draught, offered it to the others. "Cocktails, sir," he explained with dignified precision. "A gentleman, sir, should never go out without 'em. Keeps off the morning chill. I remember going out in '53 with Hank Boompointer. Good god, sir, the man had to put on his overcoat, and was shot in it. Fact!"

But the noise of wheels drowned the Colonel's reminiscences, and a rapidly driven buggy, containing Jack Folinsbee, Calhoun Bungstarter, his second, and Bill Masters, drew up on the ground. Jack Folinsbee leaped out gayly. "I had the jolliest work to get away without the governor's hearing," he began, addressing the group before him with the greatest volubility. Calhoun Bungstarter touched his arm, and the young man blushed. It was his first duel.

"If you are ready, gentlemen," said Mr. Bungstarter, "we had better proceed to business. I believe it is understood that no apology will be offered or accepted. We

may as well settle preliminaries at once, or I fear we shall be interrupted. There is a rumor in town that the Vigilance Committee are seeking our friends the Starbottles, and I believe, as their fellow-countryman, I have the honor to be included in their warrant."

At this probability of interruption, that gravity which had hitherto been wanting fell upon the group. The preliminaries were soon arranged and the principals placed in position. Then there was a silence.

To a spectator from the hill, impressed with the picnic suggestion, what might have been the popping of two champagne corks broke the stillness.

Culpepper had fired in the air. Colonel Starbottle uttered a low curse. John Folinsbee sulkily demanded another shot.

Again the parties stood opposed to each other. Again the word was given, and what seemed to be the simultaneous report of both pistols rose upon the air. But after an interval of a few seconds all were surprised to see Culpepper slowly raise his unexploded weapon and fire it harmlessly above his head. Then, throwing the pistol upon the ground, he walked to a tree and leaned silently against it.

Jack Folinsbee flew into a paroxysm of fury. Colonel Starbottle raved and swore. Mr. Bungstarter was properly shocked at their conduct. "Really, gentlemen, if Mr. Culpepper Starbottle declines another shot, I do not see how we can proceed."

But the Colonel's blood was up, and Jack Folinsbee was equally implacable. A hurried consultation ensued, which ended by Colonel Starbottle taking his nephew's place as principal, Bill Masters acting as second, *vice* Mr. Bungstarter, who declined all further connection with the affair.

Two distinct reports rang through the Hollow. Jack Folinsbee dropped his smoking pistol, took a step forward, and then dropped heavily upon his face.

In a moment the surgeon was at his side. The confusion was heightened by the trampling of hoofs, and the voice of the blacksmith bidding them flee for their lives before the coming storm. A moment more and the ground was cleared, and the surgeon, looking up, beheld only the white face of Culpepper bending over him.

"Can you save him?"

"I cannot say. Hold up his head a moment, while I run to the buggy."

Culpepper passed his arm tenderly around the neck of the insensible man. Presently the surgeon returned with some stimulants.

"There, that will do, Mr. Starbottle, thank you. Now my advice is to get away from here while you can. I'll look after Folinsbee. Do you hear?"

Culpepper's arm was still round the neck of his late foe, but his head had dropped and fallen on the wounded man's shoulder. The surgeon looked down, and, catching sight of his face, stooped and lifted him gently in his arms. He opened his coat and waistcoat. There was blood upon his shirt, and a bullet-hole in his breast. He had been shot unto death at the first fire.

THE PRINCESS BOB AND HER FRIENDS.

She was a Klamath Indian. Her title was, I think, a compromise between her claim as daughter of a chief and gratitude to her earliest white protector, whose name, after the Indian fashion, she had adopted. "Bob" Walker had taken her from the breast of her dead mother at a time when the sincere volunteer soldiery of the California frontier were impressed with the belief that extermination was the manifest destiny of the Indian race. He had with difficulty restrained the noble zeal of his compatriots long enough to convince them that the exemption of one Indian baby would not invalidate this theory. And he took her to his home, — a pastoral clearing on the banks of the Salmon River, — where she was cared for after a frontier fashion.

Before she was nine years old, she had exhausted the scant kindliness of the thin,

overworked Mrs. Walker. As a playfellow of the young Walkers she was unreliable; as a nurse for the baby she was inefficient. She lost the former in the trackless depths of a redwood forest; she basely abandoned the latter in an extemporized cradle, hanging like a chrysalis to a convenient bough. She lied and she stole, — two unpardonable sins in a frontier community, where truth was a necessity and provisions were the only property. Worse than this, the outskirts of the clearing were sometimes haunted by blanketed tatterdemalions with whom she had mysterious confidences. Mr. Walker more than once regretted his indiscreet humanity; but she presently relieved him of responsibility, and possibly of bloodguiltiness, by disappearing entirely.

When she reappeared, it was at the adjacent village of Logport, in the capacity of housemaid to a trader's wife, who, joining some little culture to considerable conscientiousness, attempted to instruct her charge. But the Princess proved an unsatisfactory pupil to even so liberal a teacher. She accepted the alphabet with great good-humor, but always as a pleasing and recurring novelty, in which all interest expired at the comple-

tion of each lesson. She found a thousand uses for her books and writing materials other than those known to civilized children. She made a curious necklace of bits of slate-pencil, she constructed a miniature canoe from the pasteboard covers of her primer, she bent her pens into fish-hooks, and tattooed the faces of her younger companions with blue ink. Religious instruction she received as good-humoredly, and learned to pronounce the name of the Deity with a cheerful familiarity that shocked her preceptress. Nor could her reverence be reached through analogy; she knew nothing of the Great Spirit, and professed entire ignorance of the Happy Hunting-Grounds. Yet she attended divine service regularly, and as regularly asked for a hymn-book; and it was only through the discovery that she had collected twenty-five of these volumes, and had hidden them behind the woodpile, that her connection with the First Baptist Church of Logport ceased. She would occasionally abandon these civilized and Christian privileges, and disappear from her home, returning after several days of absence with an odor of bark and fish, and a peace-offering to her mistress in the shape of venison or game.

To add to her troubles, she was now fourteen, and, according to the laws of her race, a woman. I do not think the most romantic fancy would have called her pretty. Her complexion defied most of those ambiguous similes through which poets unconsciously apologize for any deviation from the Caucasian standard. It was not wine nor amber colored; if anything, it was smoky. Her face was tattooed with red and white lines on one cheek, as if a fine-toothed comb had been drawn from cheek-bone to jaw, and, but for the good-humor that beamed from her small berry-like eyes and shone in her white teeth, would have been repulsive. She was short and stout. In her scant drapery and unrestrained freedom she was hardly statuesque, and her more unstudied attitudes were marred by a simian habit of softly scratching her left ankle with the toes of her right foot, in moments of contemplation.

I think I have already shown enough to indicate the incongruity of her existence with even the low standard of civilization that obtained at Logport in the year 1860. It needed but one more fact to prove the far-sighted political sagacity and prophetic ethics of those sincere advocates of extermi-

nation, to whose virtues I have done but scant justice in the beginning of this article. This fact was presently furnished by the Princess. After one of her periodical disappearances, — this time unusually prolonged, — she astonished Logport by returning with a half-breed baby of a week old in her arms. That night a meeting of the hard-featured serious matrons of Logport was held at Mrs. Brown's. The immediate banishment of the Princess was demanded. Soft-hearted Mrs. Brown endeavored vainly to get a mitigation or suspension of the sentence. But, as on a former occasion, the Princess took matters into her own hands. A few mornings afterwards, a wicker cradle containing an Indian baby was found hanging on the handle of the door of the First Baptist Church. It was the Parthian arrow of the flying Princess. From that day Logport knew her no more.

It had been a bright, clear day on the upland, — so clear that the ramparts of Fort Jackson and the flagstaff were plainly visible twelve miles away from the long, curving peninsula that stretched a bared white arm around the peaceful waters of Logport Bay.

It had been a clear day upon the sea-shore, albeit the air was filled with the flying spume and shifting sand of a straggling beach, whose low dunes were dragged down by the long surges of the Pacific and thrown up again by the tumultuous trade-winds. But the sun had gone down in a bank of fleecy fog that was beginning to roll in upon the beach. Gradually the headland at the entrance of the harbor and the lighthouse disappeared, then the willow fringe that marked the line of Salmon River vanished, and the ocean was gone. A few sails still gleamed on the waters of the bay; but the advancing fog wiped them out one by one, crept across the steel-blue expanse, swallowed up the white mills and single spire of Logport, and, joining with reinforcements from the marshes, moved solemnly upon the hills. Ten minutes more and the landscape was utterly blotted out; simultaneously the wind died away, and a death-like silence stole over sea and shore. The faint clang, high overhead, of unseen brent, the nearer call of invisible plover, the lap and wash of undistinguishable waters, and the monotonous roll of the vanished ocean were the only sounds. As night deepened, the far-off boom-

ing of the fog-bell on the headland at intervals stirred the thick air.

Hard by the shore of the bay, and half hidden by a drifting sand-hill, stood a low nondescript structure, to whose composition sea and shore had equally contributed. It was built partly of logs and partly of driftwood and tarred canvas. Joined to one end of the main building — the ordinary log-cabin of the settler — was the half-round pilot-house of some wrecked steamer, while the other gable terminated in half of a broken whale-boat. Nailed against the boat were the dried skins of wild animals, and scattered about lay the flotsam and jetsam of many years' gathering, — bamboo crates, casks, hatches, blocks, oars, boxes, part of a whale's vertebræ, and the blades of sword-fish. Drawn up on the beach of a little cove before the house lay a canoe. As the night thickened and the fog grew more dense, these details grew imperceptible, and only the windows of the pilot-house, lit up by a roaring fire within the hut, gleamed redly through the mist.

By this fire, beneath a ship's lamp that swung from the roof, two figures were seated, a man and a woman. The man, broad

shouldered and heavily bearded, stretched his listless powerful length beyond a broken bamboo chair, with his eyes fixed on the fire. The woman crouched cross-legged upon the broad earthen hearth, with her eyes blinkingly fixed on her companion. They were small, black, round, berry-like eyes, and as the firelight shone upon her smoky face, with its one striped cheek of gorgeous brilliancy, it was plainly the Princess Bob, and no other.

Not a word was spoken. They had been sitting thus for more than an hour, and there was about their attitude a suggestion that silence was habitual. Once or twice the man rose and walked up and down the narrow room, or gazed absently from the windows of the pilot-house, but never by look or sign betrayed the slightest consciousness of his companion. At such times the Princess from her nest by the fire followed him with eyes of canine expectancy and wistfulness. But he would as inevitably return to his contemplation of the fire, and the Princess to her blinking watchfulness of his face.

They had sat there silent and undisturbed for many an evening in fair weather and foul. They had spent many a day in sun-

shine and storm, gathering the unclaimed spoil of sea and shore. They had kept these mute relations, varied only by the incidents of the hunt or meagre household duties, for three years, ever since the man, wandering moodily over the lonely sands, had fallen upon the half-starved woman lying in the little hollow where she had crawled to die. It had seemed as if they would never be disturbed, until now, when the Princess started, and, with the instinct of her race, bent her ear to the ground.

The wind had risen and was rattling the tarred canvas. But in another moment there plainly came from without the hut the sound of voices. Then followed a rap at the door; then another rap; and then, before they could rise to their feet, the door was flung briskly open.

"I beg your pardon," said a pleasant but somewhat decided contralto voice, "but I don't think you heard me knock. Ah, I see you did not. May I come in?"

There was no reply. Had the battered figure-head of the Goddess of Liberty, which lay deeply embedded in the sand on the beach, suddenly appeared at the door, demanding admittance, the occupants

of the cabin could not have been more speechlessly and hopelessly astonished than at the form which stood in the open doorway.

It was that of a slim, shapely, elegantly dressed young woman. A scarlet-lined silken hood was half thrown back from the shining mass of the black hair that covered her small head; from her pretty shoulders dropped a fur cloak, only restrained by a cord and tassel in her small gloved hand. Around her full throat was a double necklace of large white beads, that by some cunning feminine trick relieved with its infantile suggestion the strong decision of her lower face.

"Did you say yes? Ah, thank you. We may come in, Barker." (Here a shadow in a blue army overcoat followed her into the cabin, touched its cap respectfully, and then stood silent and erect against the wall.) "Don't disturb yourself in the least, I beg. What a distressingly unpleasant night! Is this your usual climate?"

Half graciously, half absently overlooking the still embarrassed silence of the group, she went on: "We started from the fort over three hours ago, — three hours ago,

was n't it, Barker?" (the erect Barker touched his cap) — "to go to Captain Emmons's quarters on Indian Island, — I think you call it Indian Island, don't you?" (she was appealing to the awe-stricken Princess) — "and we got into the fog and lost our way; that is, Barker lost his way" (Barker touched his cap deprecatingly), "and goodness knows where we did n't wander to until we mistook your light for the lighthouse, and pulled up here. No, no; pray keep your seat, do! Really, I must insist."

Nothing could exceed the languid grace of the latter part of this speech, — nothing except the easy unconsciousness with which she glided by the offered chair of her stammering, embarrassed host, and stood beside the open hearth.

"Barker will tell you," she continued, warming her feet by the fire, "that I am Miss Portfire, daughter of Major Portfire, commanding the post. Ah, excuse me, child!" (She had accidentally trodden upon the bare, yellow toes of the Princess.) "Really, I did not know you were there. I am very near-sighted." (In confirmation of her statement, she put to her eyes a dainty double eyeglass that dangled from her neck.)

"It's a shocking thing to be near-sighted, is n't it?"

If the shamefaced, uneasy man to whom this remark was addressed could have found words to utter the thought that even in his confusion struggled uppermost in his mind, he would, looking at the bold, dark eyes that questioned him, have denied the fact. But he only stammered, "Yes." The next moment, however, Miss Portfire had apparently forgotten him, and was examining the Princess through her glass.

"And what is your name, child?"

The Princess, beatified by the eyes and eyeglass, showed all her white teeth at once, and softly scratched her leg.

"Bob."

"Bob? What a singular name!"

Miss Portfire's host here hastened to explain the origin of the Princess's title.

"Then *you* are Bob." (Eyeglass.)

"No, my name is Grey, — John Grey." And he actually achieved a bow where awkwardness was rather the air of imperfectly recalling a forgotten habit.

"Grey? — ah, let me see. Yes, certainly. You are Mr. Grey, the recluse, the hermit, the philosopher, and all that sort of thing

Why, certainly; Dr. Jones, our surgeon, has told me all about you. Dear me, how interesting a rencontre! Lived all alone here for seven — was it seven years? — yes, I remember now. Existed quite *au naturel*, one might say. How odd! Not that I know anything about that sort of thing, you know. I've lived always among people, and am really quite a stranger, I assure you. But honestly, Mr. — I beg your pardon — Mr. Grey, how do you like it?"

She had quietly taken his chair and thrown her cloak and hood over its back, and was now thoughtfully removing her gloves. Whatever were the arguments, — and they were doubtless many and profound, — whatever the experience, — and it was doubtless hard and satisfying enough, — by which this unfortunate man had justified his life for the last seven years, somehow they suddenly became trivial and terribly ridiculous before this simple but practical question.

"Well, you shall tell me all about it after you have given me something to eat. We will have time enough; Barker cannot find his way back in this fog to-night. Now don't put yourselves to any trouble on my account. Barker will assist."

Barker came forward. Glad to escape the scrutiny of his guest, the hermit gave a few rapid directions to the Princess in her native tongue, and disappeared in the shed. Left a moment alone, Miss Portfire took a quick, half-audible, feminine inventory of the cabin. "Books, guns, skins, *one* chair, *one* bed, no pictures, and no looking-glass!" She took a book from the swinging shelf and resumed her seat by the fire as the Princess reëntered with fresh fuel. But while kneeling on the hearth the Princess chanced to look up and met Miss Portfire's dark eyes over the edge of her book.

"Bob!"

The Princess showed her teeth.

"Listen. Would you like to have fine clothes, rings, and beads like these, to have your hair nicely combed and put up so? Would you?"

The Princess nodded violently.

"Would you like to live with me and have them? Answer quickly. Don't look round for *him*. Speak for yourself. Would you? Hush; never mind now."

The hermit reëntered, and the Princess, blinking, retreated into the shadow of the whale-boat shed, from which she did not

emerge even when the homely repast of cold venison, ship biscuit, and tea was served. Miss Portfire noticed her absence: "You really must not let me interfere with your usual simple ways. Do you know, this is exceedingly interesting to me, so pastoral and patriarchal, and all that sort of thing. I must insist upon the Princess coming back; really, I must."

But the Princess was not to be found in the shed, and Miss Portfire, who the next minute seemed to have forgotten all about her, took her place in the single chair before an extemporized table. Barker stood behind her, and the hermit leaned against the fireplace. Miss Portfire's appetite did not come up to her protestations. For the first time in seven years it occurred to the hermit that his ordinary victual might be improved. He stammered out something to that effect.

"I have eaten better, and worse," said Miss Portfire, quietly.

"But I thought you — that is, you said" —

"I spent a year in the hospitals, when father was on the Potomac," returned Miss Portfire, composedly. After a pause she continued: "You remember after the second Bull Run — But, dear me! I beg your par-

don; of course, you know nothing about the war, and all that sort of thing, and don't care." (She put up her eyeglass, and quietly surveyed his broad, muscular figure against the chimney.) "Or, perhaps, your prejudices — But then, as a hermit you know you have no politics, of course. Please don't let me bore you."

To have been strictly consistent, the hermit should have exhibited no interest in this topic. Perhaps it was owing to some quality in the narrator, but he was constrained to beg her to continue in such phrases as his unfamiliar lips could command. So that, little by little, Miss Portfire yielded up incident and personal observation of the contest then raging; with the same half-abstracted, half-unconcerned air that seemed habitual to her, she told the stories of privation, of suffering, of endurance, and of sacrifice. With the same assumption of timid deference that concealed her great self-control, she talked of principles and rights. Apparently without enthusiasm and without effort, of which his morbid nature would have been suspicious, she sang the great American Iliad in a way that stirred the depths of her solitary auditor to its massive

foundations. Then she stopped, and asked quietly, "Where is Bob?"

The hermit started. He would look for her. But Bob, for some reason, was not forthcoming. Search was made within and without the hut, but in vain. For the first time that evening Miss Portfire showed some anxiety. "Go," she said to Barker, "and find her. She *must* be found. Stay, give me your overcoat; I'll go myself." She threw the overcoat over her shoulders and stepped out into the night. In the thick veil of fog that seemed suddenly to inwrap her, she stood for a moment irresolute, and then walked toward the beach, guided by the low wash of waters on the sand. She had not taken many steps before she stumbled over some dark crouching object. Reaching down her hand, she felt the coarse, wiry mane of the Princess.

"Bob!"

There was no reply.

"Bob! I've been looking for you; come."

"Go 'way."

"Nonsense, Bob. I want you to stay with me to-night; come."

"Injin squaw no good for waugee woman. Go 'way."

"Listen, Bob. You are daughter of a chief: so am I. Your father had many warriors: so has mine. It is good that you stay with me. Come."

The Princess chuckled, and suffered herself to be lifted up. A few moments later and they reëntered the hut, hand in hand.

With the first red streaks of dawn the next day the erect Barker touched his cap at the door of the hut. Beside him stood the hermit, also just risen from his blanketed nest in the sand. Forth from the hut, fresh as the morning air, stepped Miss Portfire, leading the Princess by the hand. Hand in hand also they walked to the shore, and when the Princess had been safely bestowed in the stern sheets, Miss Portfire turned and held out her own to her late host.

"I shall take the best of care of her, of course. You will come and see her often. I should ask you to come and see me, but you are a hermit, you know, and all that sort of thing. But if it 's the correct anchorite thing, and can be done, my father will be glad to requite you for this night's hospitality. But don't do anything on my account that interferes with your simple habits. Good-by."

She handed him a card, which he took mechanically.

"Good-by."

The sail was hoisted, and the boat shoved off. As the fresh morning breeze caught the white canvas it seemed to bow a parting salutation. There was a rosy flush of promise on the water, and as the light craft darted forward toward the ascending sun it seemed for a moment uplifted in its glory.

Miss Portfire kept her word. If thoughtful care and intelligent kindness could regenerate the Princess, her future was secure. And it really seemed as if she were for the first time inclined to heed the lessons of civilization and profit by her new condition. An agreeable change was first noticed in her appearance. Her lawless hair was caught in a net, and no longer strayed over her low forehead. Her unstable bust was stayed and upheld by French corsets; her plantigrade shuffle was limited by heeled boots. Her dresses were neat and clean, and she wore a double necklace of glass beads. With this physical improvement there also seemed some moral awakening. She no longer stole nor lied. With the possession of personal

property came a respect for that of others. With increased dependence on the word of those about her came a thoughtful consideration of her own. Intellectually she was still feeble, although she grappled sturdily with the simple lessons which Miss Portfire set before her. But her zeal and simple vanity outran her discretion, and she would often sit for hours with an open book before her, which she could not read. She was a favorite with the officers at the fort, from the Major, who shared his daughter's prejudices and often yielded to her powerful self-will, to the subalterns, who liked her none the less that their natural enemies, the frontier volunteers, had declared war against her helpless sisterhood. The only restraint put upon her was the limitation of her liberty to the enclosure of the fort and parade; and only once did she break this parole, and was stopped by the sentry as she stepped into a boat at the landing.

The recluse did not avail himself of Miss Portfire's invitation. But after the departure of the Princess he spent less of his time in the hut, and was more frequently seen in the distant marshes of Eel River and on the upland hills. A feverish restlessness, quite

opposed to his usual phlegm, led him into singular freaks strangely inconsistent with his usual habits and reputation. The purser of the occasional steamer which stopped at Logport with the mails reported to have been boarded, just inside the bar, by a strange bearded man, who asked for a newspaper containing the last war telegrams. He tore his red shirt into narrow strips, and spent two days with his needle over the pieces and the tattered remnant of his only white garment; and a few days afterward the fishermen on the bay were surprised to see what, on nearer approach, proved to be a rude imitation of the national flag floating from a spar above the hut.

One evening, as the fog began to drift over the sand-hills, the recluse sat alone in his hut. The fire was dying unheeded on the hearth, for he had been sitting there for a long time, completely absorbed in the blurred pages of an old newspaper. Presently he arose, and, refolding it, — an operation of great care and delicacy in its tattered condition, — placed it under the blankets of his bed. He resumed his seat by the fire, but soon began drumming with his fingers on the arm of his chair. Eventually this

assumed the time and accent of some air Then he began to whistle softly and hesitatingly, as if trying to recall a forgotten tune. Finally this took shape in a rude resemblance, not unlike that which his flag bore to the national standard, to Yankee Doodle. Suddenly he stopped.

There was an unmistakable rapping at the door. The blood which had at first rushed to his face now forsook it, and settled slowly around his heart. He tried to rise, but could not. Then the door was flung open, and a figure with a scarlet-lined hood and fur mantle stood on the threshold. With a mighty effort he took one stride to the door. The next moment he saw the wide mouth and white teeth of the Princess, and was greeted by a kiss that felt like a baptism.

To tear the hood and mantle from her figure in the sudden fury that seized him, and to fiercely demand the reason of this masquerade, was his only return to her greeting. "Why are you here? Did you steal these garments?" he again demanded in her guttural language, as he shook her roughly by the arm. The Princess hung her head. "Did you?" he screamed, as he reached wildly for his rifle.

"I did."

His hold relaxed, and he staggered back against the wall. The Princess began to whimper. Between her sobs, she was trying to explain that the Major and his daughter were going away, and that they wanted to send her to the Reservation; but he cut her short. "Take off those things!" The Princess tremblingly obeyed. He rolled them up, placed them in the canoe she had just left, and then leaped into the frail craft. She would have followed, but with a great oath he threw her from him, and with one stroke of his paddle swept out into the fog, and was gone.

"Jessamy," said the Major, a few days after, as he sat at dinner with his daughter, "I think I can tell you something to match the mysterious disappearance and return of your wardrobe. Your crazy friend, the recluse, has enlisted this morning in the Fourth Artillery. He 's a splendid-looking animal, and there 's the right stuff for a soldier in him, if I 'm not mistaken. He 's in earnest too, for he enlists in the regiment ordered back to Washington. Bless me, child, another goblet broken! You 'll ruin the mess in glassware, at this rate!"

"Have you heard anything more of the Princess, papa?"

"Nothing; but perhaps it 's as well that she has gone. These cursed settlers are at their old complaints again about what they call 'Indian depredations,' and I have just received orders from headquarters to keep the settlement clear of all vagabond aborigines. I am afraid, my dear, that a strict construction of the term would include your *protégée*."

The time for the departure of the Fourth Artillery had come. The night before was thick and foggy. At one o'clock, a shot on the ramparts called out the guard and roused the sleeping garrison. The new sentry, Private Grey, had challenged a dusky figure creeping on the glacis, and, receiving no answer, had fired. The guard sent out presently returned, bearing a lifeless figure in their arms. The new sentry's zeal, joined with an ex-frontiersman's aim, was fatal.

They laid the helpless, ragged form before the guard-house door, and then saw for the first time that it was the Princess. Presently she opened her eyes. They fell upon the agonized face of her innocent slayer, but happily without intelligence or reproach.

"Georgy!" she whispered.

"Bob!"

"All 's same now. Me get plenty well soon. Me make no more fuss. Me go to Reservation."

Then she stopped; a tremor ran through her limbs, and she lay still. She had gone to the Reservation. Not that devised by the wisdom of man, but that one set apart from the foundation of the world for the wisest as well as the meanest of His creatures.

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